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The Spanish Wine

by Frank Mathew







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THE SPANISH WINE

THE SPANISH WINE

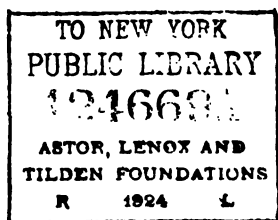
BY
JAMES ^{oc}
FRANK ~~MATHEW~~



JOHN LANE: THE BODLEY HEAD
LONDON AND NEW YORK

1898
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THE
BODLEY
HEAD



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University Press

JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.

JOHN WILSON
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Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. WHILE THE BELL TOLLED	I
II. RED JAMES OF THE SPEARS . . .	10
III. A REHEARSAL OF PASSION	35
IV. WHEN ALL WERE YOUNG	57
V. A TINY ADVENTURER.	74
VI. IN THE DAYS OF THE SIEGE . . .	89
VII. OUT OF THE PAST	104
VIII. WHEN ALL WERE OLD	127
IX. A SINNER'S TRAGEDY.	142
X. THE SPANISH WINE	169

Anderson 14 Jan. 1924

The Spanish Wine

CHAPTER I

WHILE THE BELL TOLLED

"THE bell is tolling for me," said Dunluce, as he looked down at his wife.

"A wasted warning, my lord," said the monk, seated in the nook of the window, with the dwarf at his side, and listening to the tramp of the sentries along the ramparts beneath, and the bell tolling among the lines of besiegers.

"In such a time, the loudest warnings are wasted," said Dunluce, without turning, as he stood leaning his left elbow on the ponderous mantelpiece. "I can hold the Castle three days at the most — unless the ships come from England."

The Spanish Wine

"I have watched for them till my eyes are worn out," said his wife, as she faced them in her great chair between the table and hearth and kept her eyes on the logs. "I thought I could see the glimmering of the sails in the moonlight. Then the bell tolled, and woke me out of my dream."

The firelight was on her lofty and cold face and the tapestry circling the room with ghostly and fantastical figures that wavered, for a wind had begun, and all the house echoed the passionate inarticulate sea.

Dunluce had the air of a giant in the irresolute twilight that reddened his breastplate and the hilt of his sword.

"So they toll for Downpatrick: I am sorry he is gone," said he. "Watchful callous Downpatrick, with his effeminate ways!"

"I always liked him," his wife said, as she bent forward and held her hands to the fire and it was bright on her rings. In her black

While the Bell Tolled

dress with the lace about her neck and her wrists, she appeared old, for there was grey in her hair.

"Too much, I used to think in old times. But that is long ago now: I have hardly an old enemy left. I don't know what has come over me," he went on, with a shudder. "I feel as if I was doomed."

His wife winced, as he spoke; and she leant back in her chair, clasping her thin hands on her lap.

"Come, sir," said he quickly, as if he tried to be cheerful, as he turned to the right and faced the monk and the dwarf, who were watching him in the dusk of the window. "Where have they put that wonderful wine of yours?"

"The wine?" said the monk. "It is over there on the sideboard."

"It will do us all the good in the world," said Dunluce, as he went over to fetch it.

"I believe it would," said the monk.

The Spanish Wine

"No signs of a ship," said Dunluce, taking a silver flagon and cup, and looking out of the window between the sideboard and door. "All the more reason to have a drink while we may."

With that, he came back, and put the things on the table.

"It was good of the old Abbot to send it. Spanish wine of an incredible age, he says? Come, that is a notable present. And so Downpatrick is dead! Upon my word, I am sorry. See this cup now?" he said, lifting it and holding it out.

"A beautiful cup," said the monk as he went forward and took it.

"And as old as the hills, — the cup of Tara, they call it. Listen, and I'll tell you a story. At a dinner here once, I sat over at the end of the table; and my lady was here, with Downpatrick and Sir Walter beside her. Old O'Connor stood up — did you ever hear of Sir Walter?"

While the Bell Tolloed

"I knew him well," said the monk, putting the cup down on the table.

"Did you, now; and where did you meet him? A kind fellow, a true man — but he was always my enemy. Well, he began in that husky old voice of his — how well I remember it, and his shrill wheezy laugh, as if he was going to bray! 'We have to honour the Lady Jessica's choice!' We were young then, and Downpatrick was courting her. We had been sweethearts when she was only a child. Now what was I saying? Yes, yes. Says O'Connor, 'The Lady Jessica drinks now to her fortunate lover.' Downpatrick was smiling there, and every one looked at him. I never thought of that old promise she made me. She was white as she rose, lifting the cup, and met my eyes for a moment. 'I drink to you,' she said, and held it towards me; 'I drink to you.'"

"A surprise indeed," said the monk.

"And I tell you, sir, as great a one fol-

The Spanish Wine

lowed it; for, as she put the cup to her lips, a fellow somewhere behind her — a clerk or servant, I forget his employment — leapt forward, and struck it out of her hands.”

“A mad thing to do,” said the monk, as if he spoke to himself.

“Yes; he must have been crazy. We never heard of him afterwards, or thought of him either; a common fellow, you know. He was a bastard, they said.”

Said the monk hastily, “Not a bastard, my lord.”

“You know him?”

“He was poor, but a gentleman. During the time he had lived as the Lady Jessica’s clerk, and helped her studies because her tutor was old, he had forgotten the distance between her rank and her service. Who can tell what insane hopefulness was filling his heart, as she stood lifting the cup?”

Lady Dunluce turned suddenly, and looked at the monk as he stood close at her side;

While the Bell Tolled

but his black cowl was hanging over his face.

"Did he enter the Church?" said she.

"No; he became a doctor in Italy."

"You know a great deal about him."

"Priests have to know a deal about others," he replied, with indifference.

As she turned back to the fire wearily, she said to herself, "It is impossible. It is something about his voice, I suppose."

"Italy?" said Dunluce to the monk; "and have you lived there yourself?"

"A long time."

"I'd like to live there, only Italians are so ready with poison."

"A man has as much right to use poison as a sword," said the monk. "It is the weapon that sets the learned over the strong."

"Come, come."

"You are strong."

"Well, yes."

The Spanish Wine

“And I am feeble and old.”

“I hate the notion of poison: we hear of it too often in Ireland. Fancy if you and I were afraid to touch that wine in the flagon. And that reminds me — when I have started a story, I forget everything else. To think you know that young fellow! Well, as I said, here is the cup, and the dint it got in its fall. And so he was a gentleman — well, then, it was hard, I suppose. But I can scarcely believe he would adventure so high — a puny scholar, who spent all his time thinking about studies and kickshaws, and never struck a blow in his life. All that is so long ago now. Come, sir, we must drink to his health. You can tell him that, when you see him. The young dog! I never thought I'd forgive him: but if he was a gentleman — well!”

“You can't open it without knowing the secret,” said the monk, as Dunluce handled the flagon. “And you must not think I am

While the Bell Tolloed

churlish, but I would enjoy the wine more if you could spare me a few minutes to settle about the woman who came with me."

"My word, sir, I forgot her entirely. By all means let us go to her. We will not be long," said Dunluce, as he looked again at his wife.

"Never mind me, dear: I have plenty to do," she said, as she glanced up at him slowly.

Leading the way across the round room, Dunluce lifted the screen of the door and held it up for the monk. When they had gone, the dwarf came into the glow of the fire.

"At ten o'clock, my lady?" said he.

"At ten," she said in a whisper.

CHAPTER II

RED JAMES OF THE SPEARS

LADY DUNLUCE was left alone by the fire, and her thoughts were all with the past: they ran on her childhood, and so they followed her life, as if she was attempting to find the forgotten cause of her trouble.

Though this house was her father's, her first remembrances told of a little tower in the hills. There she had been a prisoner, taken by Red James of the Spears, and had lived the pride of his clan, and the darling of that adventurous outlaw. Even now, she could remember him well, with his red tangle of hair, and his fierce moustache, and the

Red James of the Spears

meeting eyebrows that gave him such a murderous look when his blood was up, though in peace his eyes were roguish and kind, and his mouth was wistful and humorous.

The dark little tower had three stories: the first was given up to the cattle, the next was the hall, and the bedrooms were up under the roof. Round huts of woven wicker and sods, the rougher homes of the clan, were about it, though a number of men slept in the hall, while Red James had a little room overhead, and the child and her old nurse had another. Often, in the twilight, the nurse would lift her to look out when he clattered on a harrying raid. Most the men would be riding stirrupless, with spears, but the others would run as quickly, with javelins: and he would turn in his saddle, tossing his hair proudly, and flinging his cloak back, as he waved his hand to her; and so, with a shout, that eager troop would be hidden behind the rocks of the pass. Then, about dawn,

The Spanish Wine

she would hear singing beneath on the misty knolls of the mountain, and hoofs on the path, and would make her nurse hold her to see the outlaws again. Mostly, they would go and come back gladly, though they often were glum, in the day, when there was nothing to do. On many mornings, they would be laden with goods, or driving cattle before them; while bleeding heads dangled and danced merrily at the sides of the saddles. That was little to her; for she was accustomed to see English heads blacken and grin on the irregular ramparts.

In his home, James was like a boy, and would romp, with the ungainly devotion of a big dog, or would lounge on the piled heather by the turf in his hall, with his tiny playfellow in his arms, as he listened to his Senachie's songs, or watched him dancing about in the dusk, or in the gleams of the fire, to the piercing music of pipes.

This Senachie was a dwarf, but was strong

Red James of the Spears

and daring, and rode on the chief's left in the forays, and slept beyond his threshold at night. None in all the hills was more famous for songs in praise of a chief, or for historical lore. But he was not friends with the child, and kept aloof from her always; and was reluctant to let her run in, to wake the chief, in the mornings.

If the songs chanted the delights of a swooping gallop under the stars, or of heady draughts of revenge, or of the music of an enemy's shriek, Red James would be still, and she would wince in his clutch; but if the verses were praising the years when his fathers ruled in the great castle below, he would loll with serene pride, as if that room, with the rushes glistening on the floor, and the heather beds for his kilted followers, was the hall where his people banqueted in the time of their gladness. Even now he was a king to his men; and, though faring, as they did, on simple things, he had a

The Spanish Wine

service of silver. But his enemies had most his goods, and he would chiefly regret the old remarkable cup of Tara his ancestors had used at their feasts. Yet he did not seem to regret anything much, when he was at play with the child, or while his clansmen were crouching on the rushes, and passing the wooden goblets of mead, shouting unanimous at the sound of his name, or listening to the sorrowful songs of their unfortunate country.

It was pleasant up in the tower, when the wind was mad and the round hall was in the glow of the turf, and out on the hills, when the bees drowsed in the golden blossoms of furze; but she wanted to go riding with Shamus among the valleys beneath. And she could not make out why clansmen were sure to meet her and bring her back if she strayed. So she worried him often to take her too; and he laughed, and

Red James of the Spears

told her she was not big enough yet; for a giant lived down there in a castle, and was fond of plump little girls, and that was why she was guarded. But she kept on; and he was loath to refuse her anything; and so, after all, he promised to carry her down with him when the weather was fine.

So one bright morning, he lifted her on his saddle, and rode down between rocks, and then across rushy and wet slopes, to the lowlands. There she found a new and familiar country, and was sure she had seen it, though she only remembered heights and the blossoming of heather and furze. But when he drew rein where she saw the Castle dark in the distance, the big tower and the long battlements had no place in her heart.

"What is that house, Shamus?" she asked.

"It is a prison," said he.

"What is a prison, Shamus?"

"A place where they would hang me," said he.

The Spanish Wine

"Who would?" she said, open-eyed.

"A big man with a white beard."

"Oh, how wicked he must be," she said.

"I want you to kill him."

"He 'll end by killing me," he replied.

"But why will he, Shamus?"

"Because I have stolen his happiness."

"Is he the giant?" said she, shuddering,
and drawing close to her friend.

"A man stronger than giants."

"Is he over there?"

"No, but he 'll be back before long."

"He shan't hurt you, for I 'll stop him,"
she cried.

At this he laughed, stooping to her and
kissing her forehead.

"He wants to have you," said he.

"Oh, don't let him take me!" she cried.

"Would he be after eating me, Shamus?"

"He would dress you in fine clothes," said
Red James, "and teach you to be false and

Red James of the Spears

unnatural, and make you be still and forget the sun and the wind."

With that, he swung his horse round, and rode away, clutching her, as if he was afraid of the man. But she kept looking back wistfully, thinking about the beautiful clothes.

Then they rode through a green forest where the hawthorn was out and the wind was like a swarm in the leaves. So they came to a little house in a mantle of ivy in a nook under branches. There a white monk was seated under a sycamore. Birds were fluttering round him: and rabbits were at play in the grass. The monk was quite an old man, and his eyes were misty with learning, and his face was serene.

So deep was he poring on a ponderous book, he did not hear their approach.

The outlaw drew rein, and lingered, watching a moment; and then, pulling his cloak over the child, he began turning his horse. But she put her head out between the folds of his cloak,

The Spanish Wine

crying: "Look at the rabbits." At that young voice, the monk awoke from his study. Then, smiling, he got up from the roost and came to them, keeping his left forefinger in the big book to mark the place he had stopped.

"Your blessing, Father Francis," said James, bending and taking off his hat as he spoke.

The tall priest raised his right hand in blessing, as he came to his visitor.

"Sure, you were not going away?" he said gently, with a hint of reproach.

"You were lost in your studies."

"But I was not lost to my friends: and it is long since I saw you."

"I ride seldom by day: and it would be difficult to come in the dark."

"I am not blaming you, dear: and you are a thousand times welcome. But won't you come in? Look, you see the rabbits remember you: or they are so used to me, they are afraid of nobody now."

Red James of the Spears

"Shamus, I want a rabbit," the child said.

"Who is this little lady?" he said quietly to the outlaw, who reddened and made answer,

"A child we have up there on the hills with us."

The priest looked at him with sorrowful eyes.

"Your child is it, Shamus, dear?" he said gently.

"No, no, she is the Earl's."

"Oh, Shamus," she said, "look at that silly little brown rabbit."

"But how do you have her?" said Father Francis.

Red James said doggedly, "I found her unguarded in a field with her nurses, when the Earl was in Cork."

"But that was ages ago."

"Four years."

"His only child, Shamus?"

"I have no child, because the Earl has my

The Spanish Wine

home. Could I take a woman I loved to share my life in the hills?"

"Will two wrongs make a right?" said the priest. "You must give her back to her father."

"Will he give me back the house he has stolen? Will he take my father's head from the spike above the Castle in Dublin, and let me hear him call me again? And my old mother — will he bring her to life?"

"My dear, I know how much you have suffered: but you must let the child go."

"Yes, let me go," she cried, peevishly, wriggling to get out of his clutch. "Let me go, Shamus, to hunt the dear little rabbits."

"Listen now, father: that may be right for a saint, but I am only a man. This little head is the last light of my heart. I would not give her up for the world."

"Not for the world's sake, but for God's."

"Why are you hid here?" said the outlaw.

Red James of the Spears

"Because the Earl would hang you now, if he could."

"I have suffered also, you see."

"But you have never loved," said Red James. "Even if it was wrong, I would keep her — God forgive me for saying it! — and I tell you it is not wrong, it is just. Till I looked at you now, I never thought you could blame me. If the killing of my mother and father could be undone, and the Castle over beyond could be mine, and these things could only be on condition I gave her back — I would not part with the child."

So saying, he drove spurs in his horse, and was gone before the priest could reply.

"Ah! the poor lad!" sighed Father Francis, going into his home.

And she sobbed and sulked because Shamus had not caught her a rabbit.

Then, a week or so afterwards, as she was at play with him, leading him with a rope on his neck while he scrambled on all-fours

The Spanish Wine

on the rushes, the white monk came into the dark hall in the tower, with a book under his arm.

"Shamus is a bear," she cried out; "you must run away, or he'll bite you."

Shamus sprang to his feet, confused, and with a fear at his heart, for he guessed why the monk came.

"But the Earl is back, father," he said. "It is a risk for you to be out in the day-time."

"That may be," said the priest. "I never thought of it, Shamus."

This time there was no rabbit to watch, and she was indignant because her game had been spoilt. So the outlaw was cross with her for the first time, and carried her up to her room, and left her there with the nurse. But her crying made him so angry with his visitor, he was hasty and stern, and their old friendship was broken. A little time after, the white monk went away down

Red James of the Spears

the gap in the mountain, looking weary and sad.

The child would not go back to the hall, though she was longing to do it; but in the twilight she got over her sulks, and went down, and saw Shamus all alone by the fire. Though he took her on his knee, and was kind, he would not speak to her much, or make believe to be a bear any more.

Next morning, came news Father Francis had been taken a prisoner and condemned to be hanged. When Red James heard this, he said nothing, but went out of his home, and did not come back till the small hours of the night. Then he sent to say he would give the child if Father Francis was pardoned. Until the answer was known, he kept away from the tower. When the bargain was made, he took her up on his saddle, and told her they were off for a ride into the valley beneath.

So he came to the Castle, and saw a great

The Spanish Wine

many troopers in the meadows before it. The Earl was watching alone at the window of the Tapestry Room in the Great Tower, and saw the outlaw approaching, and so hastened to meet him, and was down at the gate as Red James was coming over the bridge.

Said Red James to the child, "I am going to leave you here for a little."

"Oh, Shamus! Shamus!" she cried, "will they give me beautiful clothes?"

"Yes, yes."

"And big dolls?"

"The biggest dolls in the world."

"Oh, Shamus! won't you leave me here always?"

So he drew rein by the Earl, who stood holding out his arms for the child.

"Is the priest safe?" said Red James.

The Earl did not take his eyes from his daughter, but motioned with his right hand; and Red James, turning, saw the priest in a meadow, reading a book. So he handed her

Red James of the Spears

down to her father without looking at her, or saying good-bye. The little girl was not afraid in the least, as the big man with the long white beard and the immovable face, took her, and carried her in between the rows of retainers.

The outlaw rode to the hills, thinking she was not sorry to part; and would have been even sadder, perhaps, if he had learnt how she pined afterwards, and sobbed, when there was nobody looking, and would toss in her sleep, and call aloud for him vainly.

Though he never learnt the child missed him, her father knew it only too well. Often he would stand by her bed and hear her calling the outlaw, or talking of games at hide-and-seek with her friend. Then he would go back to his room, wishing he was able to romp, and make believe to be a bear or a pig. And his daughter and he were strangers, though he fancied it

The Spanish Wine

might have been different if her mother had lived.

The Earl went on with his work, ruling the country round him, and carrying fire and sword against the rebels, and trying prisoners in his justice-hall, sending most of them away to the hangman, for only the thought of his child could make him tend towards mercy.

The child Jessica grew a very proud little woman. She had learnt early to look for honour and deference: the servants had a story that when she was a baby, she bowed to horses nodding their heads in harness, for she thought they saluted her. Two soldiers went with her as guards now: and she had wonderful dresses and a page of her own. Other children were brought to play with her, but did not enjoy it; for she was wilful and quick, and had a hatred of ridicule. Every one of her dolls was an Empress; but she broke them as soon as if they had been

Red James of the Spears

commoner stuff. Because people made so much of her, nobody could do anything with her, except Theobald Butler, who was a ward of the Earl's.

So two years went without her seeing Red James; but he used to come in disguise, and lurk out in the meadows, to watch her pass in the distance. Since he was a man hard to disguise, this folly led to his fate.

One day there was a feast in the Castle, and many lords had assembled, and Jessica glittered in a marvellous gown of cloth of gold and brocade; for her father humoured her whims, and let her dress as she chose. As she was trying on a necklace of pearls, he sent for her to come to the justice-hall. It was a narrow and long hall, with a gilded roof, and high windows, where many scutcheons were painted; and a dais stood at the end of it. When the usher opened the door on the left side of the dais, and cried, "Way for the Lady Jessica!" every one was silent,

The Spanish Wine

and turned, as she went up with her little head in the air, while her page followed her, lifting her long train, and her escort clattered behind. The tinted light through the family coat-of-arms on a window, was on her clothes and her pearls. The gentlemen, grouped on either side of her father, smiled at her loftiness: but he looked at her gravely, as if he was more touched than amused. At her father's right hand, she turned and looked at the crowd as if she owned it, but she did not observe a prisoner who stood waiting for sentence.

"A friend of yours has come here to visit you," said the Earl, and there was laughing at that.

She glanced vainly about, to see why all the people were laughing, and then she looked among the lords for her friend.

"No, he is not here," said the Earl; "but look, below there, in front of you."

Then she met the prisoner's eyes: he was

Red James of the Spears

a tall fellow in rags, and his red hair had been clotted and made dark by the rain. But she knew him at once: and the colour flashed to her face. It was Red James of the Spears: and he looked at her with worshipping eyes, and that good smile of his, as if they were alone.

"I see you remember him," the Earl said to her, and every one laughed.

She could not believe they dared to laugh so at her.

"The man is a rebel," he went on, "but I believe he was good to you. If you love him, you can let him go free."

The blood throbbed in her temples, and she was shaken with anger against every one there, and Red James himself, more than all, as if it was his fault she was mocked.

"The man is no friend of mine," she said, as if she was choking.

"Then he shall hang, at dawn," said the Earl.

The Spanish Wine

So she swept out of the hall more proudly than she had come. And she went to her room, and lay there crying for hours.

That evening, the Earl sat at the wine with the gentlemen in the Tapestry Room, for though in other houses the followers would be at table with only a saltcellar to set them apart from their masters up at the top, there were prouder ways in the Castle. As he was passing the cup of Tara to his neighbour, he felt a little hand on his sleeve. Looking down to his left, he saw the woebegone smirched face of his little daughter beside him. Her look was resolved, though her eyes were aching with tears.

"Red James is my friend," she whispered; "will you let him go free?"

"Child, you were untrue to your friend in the face of all the people," he said gravely, and rested his big hand on her disorderly hair.

After a pause, he said,

Red James of the Spears

"Will you claim him to-night?"

"I will," she said, with a sob.

Then he rose, and lifted her up, with his hands under her arms, until she stood on his chair. The men wondered, and turned round to the child, as she stood, seeing nothing clearly, though afterwards she remembered it all.

"My lords," said the child, "I love Red James of the Spears, and I want my father to save him."

As that shrill little voice ended, old O'Connor got up and said huskily:

"Let us drink to the Lady Jessica's lover, and wish him a more prosperous life."

At that, there was a tumult of laughing; but the Earl pressed her aching head to his heart, for she was just so high as she stood up on the chair.

"Never mind them, sweetheart," said he; "you are your mother's child, after all."

With this, he lifted her down, and taking

The Spanish Wine

her left hand, led her over to the seneschal, and gave her a key. Stopping at the door of the room, he let her go by herself, for her tears were hard to keep back. As the door was shut after her, Jessica flung away the big key, and threw herself prone on the landing, and rolled there in the dust, biting her lips and crying, and hating her father, and Red James, and the world.

When she was worn, the dread of being discovered made her get up, drying her eyes, and take the torch from its open frame on the landing. Holding the torch in her left hand, and the key in her right, she went down the narrow and winding stairs and along the desolate corridors. There she passed by a revelry of soldiers and grooms. Some of them saw the tiny woman go by, with her torn elaborate train sweeping the flags, while the dusky flame of the torch was flapping over her head.

The sound of singing died out behind her,

Red James of the Spears

as she came to the cells. When she put the key in the lock, she listened, and heard nothing at all. She could not turn it till she laid the torch down, and put both hands to the task. The key was over her head, and hurt her hands, but at length it turned, groaning: and she pushed the big door, with all her might, and it swung open a little. Then she could hear the heavy sound of a sigh.

Now her heart failed, and she was afraid to go in. Listening, she heard nothing, and so, plucking up her courage again, she pushed the door with both hands. Creaking, it swung clumsily open.

Red James of the Spears was lying flat on the ground, in his naked and narrow cell; and the moonlight was coming in through the bars of the little window, and showing his tired face and his half-open eyes, and the rusty links of his fetters.

“Won’t you be forgiving me, Shamus?”

The Spanish Wine

she cried, stretching out her hands to him feebly. "I have told every one I love you indeed."

Though he seemed to be watching her, as if he was awaiting her coming, he did not stir at her voice. The sigh came again: and this time, she knew it was the noise of the sea on the rocks under the window. Thinking he was asleep, she ran in, and knelt by him, flinging her arms round his neck, as she used, when she woke him up from his heather bed in his little tower in the hills.

"Shamus," she cried to him, laughingly, "it is time to get up: the sun is over the mountain."

But Red James had gone free.

CHAPTER III

A REHEARSAL OF PASSION

AS Lady Dunluce thought of that scene, she winced, and her mind passed by her girlhood without lingering long.

The outlaws were let come for the burial of Red James of the Spears, and so, riding together for the last time, they took him away, and scattered over the hills, leaving the little tower to the ivy. One of them came back to the Castle: that was the dwarf; and he begged the child to protect him, saying he had no friend in the world, for the rest of the clan had only envied and feared him. For the sake of his master, and because she was

The Spanish Wine

flattered and was fond of his stories, she begged to keep him, and her father gave way. The dwarf became her attendant, and told her wonderful tales; but would not speak of his master: neither did any one ever hear him singing again.

As time went on, he got permission to sleep in the lower part of the Castle. There the men were afraid of him, and let him alone. "Shaun the Bat" he was called, because he was so unquiet, and solitary, and always in black. Strange stories were heard of his doings; and it was said he had chosen to live in a narrow cell by the water, as if he was in prison, and slept on its threshold, and rowed himself in and out of the caverns in the rock under the Castle, as if he thought there was gold in those sandy dens of the sea. Wilder legends there were, how the watchmen had seen him dancing to the disconsolate music of his pipes, on the ramparts, when the moon was aloft, and how the men of the Valley had

A Rehearsal of Passion

been wakened in terror by the womanish wild cheer of his clan, as he rode madly on shiny nights as if he headed a charge. But those who repeated such things to her, found it was unsafe to miscall him, and he did as he liked. Mostly he was silent, and seemed to be always waiting for something, as a dog watches and wonders when its master is dead.

The daily life of the Castle was soldierly: and Jessica woke to bugles blowing at dawn; and the bumping noise of the drums throbbed in her ears without disturbing her dreams; and the challenges of sentries beneath, or the clatter of spurs on the ramparts, or the cry of the watchmen on the walls, were as little to her as the common din of a road to people living in towns.

The girl took after her father: but that pitiless soldier had given his whole heart to his wife, who had lived as if the world was a convent where every one was loving and good.

The Spanish Wine

Now, finding little gentleness shown in his child's haughty reserve, he took the blame to himself. Through her mother she had the impetuous blood of the O'Neills: while her father was of a family settled so long in Leinster, the spell of the hills had moulded it with the passionate Irish. Then her childhood had been hurtful to harden her. Years after her return to the Castle, she would dream of the outlaws coming back with rejoicing among the mists of the dawn, though that hunted tribe had forsaken its windy home in the hills. Sometimes, she would wake in the night, and hear the snores of the waves, and think the men had come back, and she would listen for the champing and stamping of ponies in the stable beneath, to tell her Shamus was home. The dogged rush of morose and indefatigable breakers was the refrain of her life.

So the Earl, casting about for some milder influence, thought of the silent priest who had

A Rehearsal of Passion

risked his life to endeavour to move the outlaw to part with her. True, he had meant to bring the priest to the gallows, as a matter of course, like killing the women and children of insubordinate clans. But he had no religion at all, and now the laws against monks had grown a little disused. Gentle people were rare, and as he had not repaid Father Francis, he had more than a mind to make a friend of him now. But that student had strolled away, buried in a cumbersome book. As the garrison had not heard of him since, it was probable somebody had caught him, after all, and had spiked his head for an ornament to the Castle at Dublin.

The dwarf was set to find out: and said the priest was alone and dying in the hut in the woods. When they rode there, the meadow was overrun by the rabbits. Father Francis had lived on the things he grew in his garden, till he fell sick, and then he was contented to starve. When they lifted him up, he was far

The Spanish Wine

gone, and did not seem to be clear whether they took him to execution or no; and the matter apparently did not interest him at all. He looked on life with aloofness, as if his chances had befallen a stranger.

So he was nursed in the Castle; and when he was better, the Earl begged him to stop, as the child's tutor, and train her in her mother's religion. The priest thought he was bound to consent, and, indeed, was not reluctant to find a shelter at last, since he was old, and the woods were often dreary and damp, and now his house would be sad, as the troopers had eaten most of his pets. So he was given a room, and another was fitted up as his chapel, and he taught Jessica Latin, but was always afraid of her.

Privately, Father Francis considered women half-witted, and their bodies repulsive, and their characters wearisome. But none ever suspected it; for his manner was full of sweetness, and they used to believe he had a

A Rehearsal of Passion

love of their company. When he stole away to his books, they put it down to his shyness, and often afflicted him to set him at ease. During the studies, Jessica would look up and discover him glowering, while his delicate lips would be a little apart, as if he wondered what had brought him to this.

It could not be said she had taken kindly to lessons, for she was lacking in patience, and loved an open-air life, and, even if it was raining, would rather ride in a downpour than be kept in the house. The only books she could stand were those that told about battles: and if she was wakeful at night, or moonish by day, she would imagine dressing up as a man, and riding off to the wars. But she was slow to talk of things near her heart: and her father no more knew her regret she was not a boy than the priest fancied how often the grave girl at her studies, in front of him, was tempted to shriek.

The Spanish Wine

While Lord Theobald Butler was there, she had a comrade to sympathize with her scorn of her sex; and because he was eleven years older, she looked up to his wisdom. There was no one in the Castle as tall as Toby, or as handsome and bright, and she was often astonished her father did not treat him with reverence, or act on his proffered opinions about matters of State. True, his self-confidence failed in the dark; for, though eager for enemies, he used to imagine dangers and take hold of his sword if he went into a room before the candles were lit. But this weakness endeared him to Jessica, who, even in childhood, did not like to feel any one was above her in everything. From the first, she was proud of his friendship, and was deeply in love with him by the time she was twelve.

The fact dawned on her the morning they quarrelled about the Empress of Spain, a stately but unintelligent doll. She had pestered him to mend its inside, till he got in

A Rehearsal of Passion

one of his tempers, and seized the poor doll and flung it out of the window. Frantic at his rudeness to her and his cruelty to the Empress of Spain, she rushed to her room to confide her tears to her pillow. There, after a little, she found her mind was divided by admiration of his manly appearance as he was hurling the doll. So she went back to let him say he was wrong, and saw no signs of him there, but the window was open, and she feared he had thrown himself out in his remorse for his crime. Terrified, she ran to the window, and saw him down on the leads, scrambling up, on all-fours, and holding the big doll in his mouth. Then she knew, for certain, she loved him with all her heart, and could never be fond of any one else.

Even then, she was ashamed of the womanliness of falling in love, but explained to herself her case differed because there could be no one like Toby. The lad was fond of her too, and since her adoration was plain, it

The Spanish Wine

would amuse him to talk to her lovingly, but making believe she was grown up, for it humbled him whenever he thought of her insignificant age. So they plighted their troth secretly, and he promised to marry her when his fortune was made; and it was all he could do to keep his face as he spoke, for the thing was only a jest.

Toby rode to the wars, gallant and gay with his new weapons and clothes: and Jessica's dreams went with him, and for quite a long time, she looked for news of his triumph. When she was sleepless in her crescent-shaped bedroom, half-way up in the tower, on the side over the water, she fancied him going single-handed to Spain, and killing the Emperor, or being made the Commander-in-Chief of the English, because he was so handsome and tall. But she would not let herself ask for him, and so it was long before she heard any news, and then an officer, chatting with her father, said Butler

A Rehearsal of Passion

was turning out a terrible fellow, and squandering his money and time with undesirable women.

"It would be a great thing for the country," said he laughingly, "if the lad did as much damage to enemies as he does to the girls."

At this, she remembered she was eavesdropping, and went out of earshot. This conduct of Toby's did not chime with her dreams; so he began to fade, and her fancy dwelt on her own future exploits, instead of harping on his.

Still, her dreams sought for a magnificent lover coming over the sea. Some fine morning, a galleon would sail out of the sunrise, with a glory of banners, and ramparted and firing salutes. The sea was now her companion, and its moods had an echo in her heart, and she was sore when the waves were charging with monotonous cheers, and was quieted if she heard them below, murmur-

The Spanish Wine

ing like a varying rain, or like the regular sweeping of a brush, when they sidled up to the beach with whispers, as if making amends for old irrational anger.

Sir Walter was glad Toby was gone; and the priest agreed with him there, for the boy had an objection to books, and never wasted a chance of interrupting the studies, and from the day he let loose a sackful of rats in the Tapestry Room, during the Latin lesson, to show his dog's cleverness at killing them, Father Francis had come as near feeling a downright dislike as he ever did in his life. The priest's love of solitude grew: and his heart clung even closer to his still and remote room, and his companions, the books. The Earl would not hear of his making way for another chaplain, but consented at once to his request for a clerk's assistance, and so Father Francis wrote to his people, and one of his cousins, a lad of twenty, arrived.

A Rehearsal of Passion

The lad was little and plain, and, though come of an old family, had lived in a house in woody Desmond, alone with his sister and his father, a crippled knight who had won honour, but nothing more tangible, in the war in the West. Old Sir Henry Cartan was soured by long neglect; and his son Sebastian, from sharing his loneliness, was silent and glum. The lad's clothes had been botched in a village, and, besides, he neglected them; and so altogether it would have been hard to imagine a greater contrast to Toby. Jessica did not trouble to notice him, and for long they were strangers.

Then the priest was ill, and Sebastian took a turn at the teaching. The old man got stronger, but left the thing as it was; though now and then he would look on at the lessons, peacefully, as if he was glad to be well out of it all.

Sebastian had never been thrown with any girl but his sister; so he lost his heart now,

The Spanish Wine

and made up his mind to keep the fact to himself. That hopeless love was a grief, for he found affliction in everything.

Soon Jessica discovered his secret, and she was not surprised; for since Toby had loved her, it would have been singular if a man so beneath him had not worshipped her also. Though the lover in her dreams would be changed with her moods, he had often a resemblance to Toby. Nowadays, there was never a word of that disheartening hero. In her blacker moods, she would stare at her likeness in her mirror, and wonder what he would think of her now, and debate with herself whether she was pretty or not, and then turn away with a wish somebody would restore her self-confidence by falling in love with her. That wish had never referred to Sebastian, and yet, when she was sure he was hers, she began to think of him kindly, and saw he knew a deal about books, and was a gentleman in spite of his awkwardness, and his

A Rehearsal of Passion

hands and feet were well formed, though that was more than she could say of the rest of him. Even his deplorable face was pleasanter because she was used to it. Watchful care to anticipate her whims had been nothing; but she noticed it now as another sign of his worship. So she grew to be friends with him: and the priest was the only one noticed it, and he had too good an opinion of Sebastian's intelligence to suspect him of loving a girl, or being eager to shackle his life by such a crippled companionship.

There is no knowing how long things might have lasted like this, if the Earl had not been wounded to death, as he was destroying a camp of hidden folk in the forest. Jessica and Sebastian took turns as his nurses, and it drew them together. The Earl had never been much to his daughter; for he was often away, and always stiff in his home, but now in his sickness he put his coldness aside. Understanding him now, she felt she had loved

The Spanish Wine

him and only knew it too late. When he died, she and Sebastian were alone by the bed; and she clung to her friend, as if she needed his love.

In after days, Jessica, thinking of the time when Sebastian and she were lovers, had many excuses for that girlish mistake. It was natural she should blunder—she thought after—for there was nobody else to take her fancy just then, and her heart was tender from grief, and the boy loved her sincerely, and she had been touched by his attempting to hide his passion, and yet angered a little because he had been able to rule it, and besides, he was poor, and so her choice was romantic, and all her friends would oppose it, and she wanted to prove she could have her way if she liked. While she fancied she loved him, she did not reason at all.

So Sebastian and Jessica studied love instead of Latin together; and spent their days in the Tapestry Room, and had it all to them-

A Rehearsal of Passion

selves. Since she was coming of age in a few months, she decided to keep the matter a secret, and that gave it a zest. There was no one to tell, indeed, except her guardian, Sir Walter, and he was busy with fighting. Many an hour they spent by the hearth that winter, for she abandoned her wilder tastes, and appeared to be as happy indoors as riding out in the wet, and became suddenly fond of books, and would listen delighted while he told the stories from Sophocles pictured on the tapestried walls. The Eumenidæ on the screen of the door were no longer the goblins of a fantastical tale: she grew familiar with white Colonus and the maiden Antigone, child of a blind old man. The world of the Greeks was a country where her heart was at home. Thoughts beyond the tale of her years stirred in her like the echoes or the hints of a storm. Mostly she felt that legend how the people of Ceos feasted and drank to one another in poisoned wine when they confronted the long

The Spanish Wine

humiliation of age. "So we'll do," she would say, "when our enjoyments are over." But he held his tongue; for he knew such a time could not come for him while they were together. Sometimes he would talk of his sister, a pretty and tremulous girl, whose childishness vanished in hysterical moments. Then Jessica longed to meet her and protect her from pain. Sometimes they would sit hand in hand, dreaming without speaking at all—or would wander up and down, with their arms about one another, and pause at the windows, and look out at the forest, and plot exploring it all in the sunny days of the spring, or watch the desolate sea and plan adventurous voyages. Other times, they would steal about the Castle at night, when they were tired of the room.

One night, as they went along in the dark, making believe to be looking out for adventures, they heard a shrill and fantastical echo of pipes; and the wailing of that inti-

A Rehearsal of Passion

mate music drew them down to a gallery by the water, and they came on the dwarf dancing in a patch of the moonlight, at the door of a cell. Then she knew it was where Shamus had died; and she could almost believe he was lying there on the ground, as he used to loll on the heap of the heather by the turf in his home, when he took delight in the dancing.

So the winter slipped away: and Sebastian was sorry, as he dreaded the future; but Jessica thirsted for the pleasures of life. Her eager trust in the future was a part of her happiness; for she believed she wanted everything changed. Indeed she would have been glad to change Sebastian himself, and make him better looking, and taller; for he was so short, it used to stiffen her neck to lay her head on his shoulder; but still, she loved him very much as he was. At least, she loved him at times; but as spring was drawing near, there were moments when she

The Spanish Wine

caught herself finding him different, as if an illusion had gone away from her eyes. Then she would say to herself it had been all a mistake, and she had not loved him at all: and these moments were mainly when she had been out for a canter, for she could not help seeing he looked a fool on a horse. Later on, there were days when she was sick of the sight of him, and dreaded his touch; and then, seeing him patient and grieved, she would be kinder than ever. It was all her fault — she would think — for no doubt her nature was colder, and more changing than his; and yet she kept fearing she had been making believe.

Then old Walter O'Connor came back again from the pastime of hunting the rebels, and brought his nephew along with him. This was young Lord Downpatrick, who had been taken to England in his childhood, as a pledge for his clan, the O'Conors of Down, and

A Rehearsal of Passion

brought up as a page at the Court, till he had learnt to be ashamed of his country. There was no taint of Irishry now about that delicate courtier, except a hint of a brogue his perseverance and care had been unable to banish; but he flattered himself it was unnoticed in Ireland. Downpatrick was there to win Jessica, and appeared to have chances; for he was good-looking, and had exquisite clothes, and she had a weakness for dolls.

Downpatrick was keen, and saw the situation at once. So he showed extravagant friendship for Sebastian, and praised him behind his back for the qualities likely to be unwelcome to Jessica. "Dear fellow Cartan is," he would say, "he is so simple and mild! Is not it touching to see a man of his age that knows so little of life? I do honour him for having the courage to wear that singular doublet. Such independence now, is not it?"

Then he took Sebastian for rides, mount-

The Spanish Wine

ing him on one of his horses, a quarrelsome brute, and insisted on spending hours at a time teaching him dances, and persuaded him he had an excellent voice, and gave him lessons in singing. Now Sebastian had a voice like a raven's, but he was grateful, and eager to prove other gentlemen were friends with him soon; and so he made himself entirely ridiculous.

Whatever her poor wavering fancy was worth, there was an end of it then. The very name of Sebastian grew hateful: and she felt she could kill herself when she thought of her kisses. At times, she raged in her heart against him for not altering now, and giving her the right to be free; but then she would pause, and reflect she would hate him even more if he did. But she felt Downpatrick was making her a laughing-stock; and so it appeared as if that man of the world would have his trouble for nothing.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN ALL WERE YOUNG

THINKING of that old love-affair now, Lady Dunluce sighed; but her memory kept tracing those times, as if their eager and changing happiness was dear to her yet.

Just when she turned against Sebastian, some visitors arrived at the Castle to celebrate her coming-of-age, and as these did not notice him any more than a servant, he kept aloof from the company, and stayed with the priest. Jessica was not sorry to miss him, for his face was a reproach, and the coldness he met from the visitors afflicted her pride. Downpatrick had it all his own way, after that; for the others, seeing him at home in

The Spanish Wine

the Castle, thought he was her choice; so she found him beside her, when the party rode under the shadow of the woods, or went hawking on the moors; and his tact, and the esteem every one showed him, began to tell, and she forgot her resentment. Once or twice, she found herself sighing because he had not come sooner, before she made the mistake; for she could have liked him so well, and he was in favour at Court, and had the world at his feet.

So when, watching her with those pleasant and calm eyes that understood her so well, he caught her in a moment of softness, and proposed to her after a long day on the hills, as they rode on the sands when the moon was over the sea, she very nearly accepted him. She had been so happy all day, and he had been so delightful, and it was so pleasant to find some one who understood her, and seemed to share all the fancies she never put into words, it was a task to say

When All were Young

no. Then he said such beautiful things, with the delicate phrases in the fashion in England, she who was but little accustomed to dainty talkers was charmed. His mind was full of exquisite fancies about the moon; and he said it was letting a silver ladder under the water to rescue lost sailors imprisoned in wrecks and drowned citadels in the country of fish. Then he repeated some verses, and she thought he was making them on the spur of the moment; and when he went on, modulating his murmuring voice to a tone of infinite tenderness, and told her she was his moon, and begged her, almost with tears, to let a ladder of light under the sea of despair that had drowned his soul since he met her, and to give him just a word of encouragement, she had such pity for his suffering state, she would have accepted him then, if she had not thought of Sebastian. But the word despair was enough to remind her of that unfortunate fellow;

The Spanish Wine

so she would not answer Downpatrick, but hinted his soul need not be drowned any more. Apparently overjoyed at this news, he tried to push his advantage, but gave that up, at a glance, and was full of adoration and thankfulness.

That night, he took heed to be so glad and triumphant, the others thought the matter was settled; but he put them aside airily, as if nothing was public. Next morning, however, Jessica woke calmer, and found she was glad she had not taken him yet; for she was resolute not to blunder again. And she dreaded letting Sebastian know she cared for any one else: and she pitied him in a motherly way, for her love of him had been always protecting.

Luck was hard on Downpatrick that day, for some visitors took it on themselves to congratulate Jessica, and so she attempted to undeceive them by snubbing him; but he did not appear to notice it, and was merry,

When All were Young

and paid attentions to the prettiest girl among the guests in the house. This independence annoyed her; though his silent and tragical misery, when she was alone with him, made her soften a little. Still, the thought of her late tenderness drove her into the other extreme, and she felt prosy and practical. But then the other girl's open delight was so annoying to witness, she could not make up her mind. More than once she sighed for Sebastian, because, no matter what she might do, she could be sure he was not flirting with any one. Then she was so cross with herself, she grew angry with others; and as her pride would not let her show it, she left them hawking, and went back to the Castle.

Going into the Tapestry Room, she saw Sebastian alone in it, with a book on his lap, staring into the fire hopelessly; and all of a sudden, she melted to a motherly tenderness, and running on tiptoe to the

The Spanish Wine

back of his chair, she clasped her hands on his eyes, and laughingly asked if he could guess who was holding him. Hearing the voice he had expected so little, and feeling those gentle hands on his eyes, the lad started, and was silent at first: and then, in a whisper, as if it was not easy to speak, he guessed Sir Walter was holding him; and when she laughed, and said, "Try again," he named Father Francis, and then Shaun the Bat, and every one else but Downpatrick, till smiling, she called him a foolish boy, and let go. Because she had felt tears in her hands, her heart was full of kindness towards him. So she sat on the left arm of the chair, and held his hand as she used, and forgot everything, except he was wretched, through fault of hers, and loved her so much. And, sitting so, she was startled by hearing a voice out on the stairs. A man was coming up, singing merrily in a lusty and young voice, and it was strangely familiar. Get-

When All were Young

ting up, and standing beside Sebastian, she turned round to the door.

“And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay!”

trolled that happy voice on the landing; and the door opened for Lord Theobald Butler.

Jessica looked over Sebastian, and stared at that splendid young soldier, with the plumed hat and the long curls and the breastplate and the glittering clothes. Seeing her, he took off his big hat with his left hand, staring also, as if he had expected to find a little girl in her place. With her black clothes and her mother's lace at her neck, she seemed matured to a woman.

“Forgotten me, Jess?” said he; and though his voice had grown deep, he had the half-bullying humorous way she could remember so well.

Then she saw nothing but Toby's masterful kind eyes, and the work of the years was all undone in her heart; and in a second she

The Spanish Wine

was safe in his strong arms, as if he had not been away.

When Jessica remembered Sebastian, he had slipped from the room: and when Downpatrick came in jauntily, twirling his little pretty moustache, and toying with the elaborate hilt of his dagger, he found her affectionate with a redoubtable rival.

Toby had a way with the girls as if he owned and worshipped them all; and very few of them minded it. For he was so handsome and strong and gentle, it was hard to resist him. When he stood up, the tips of his dark curls used to dangle above other men's heads; and beside him Downpatrick was like a puppet, while poor Sebastian had the look of a beetle. Then he had won a deal of distinction as a soldier of late: and no false modesty kept him from telling people the truth.

That night, Downpatrick and Sir Walter

When All were Young

sat up to talk over the turn things were likely to take now, and decided there was no time to be lost. So, first thing next morning, old Sir Walter inquired for Jessica, and found she had been for a tearing gallop with Toby, before the others were up, and was now back in her room.

Getting her leave, he hobbled into the room, supported on his stick: and she looked first at his grim face, with the jutting eyebrows and the shaggy moustache and the stumpy white beard, to try and guess what he wanted; but he was peering at something in his left hand, and it was a casket of diamonds more wonderful than she ever had seen, for her mother set little store upon jewels. Because it was her birthday, she fancied them a present for her, and her heart leapt at the thought: but then she saw it was foolish, for O'Connor was miserly. Yet, after she had looked at the stones, he told her he had brought them to

The Spanish Wine

give her; and as she exclaimed in delight, he went on to say they were meant for her wedding, and a sign of his joy she was to marry his nephew. At that, she would have put them away; but the old fellow, glaring at her with his little and tired eyes under his heavy lids, interrupted her, and said he had heard she wished to have it a secret, and girls often had such foolish ideas, but he was her guardian, and so ought to know best.

"Come, come," he went on, in his husky voice, "we must announce it to-day. You'll announce it by drinking Downpatrick's health at the dinner. A pretty fancy that is! — eh, child? — his idea of course. I never think of such things. Quite a poet, that boy is: he suits you down to the ground."

"But, Sir Walter —" she said.

"Come, come, come," said the old man doggedly. "I won't have a word. No, no, no, not a word will I hear. You accepted

When All were Young

him a couple of nights ago — the boy told me himself. That's enough now. There's an end of it, child. What more do you want? Would you like to put it off, on the chance of finding somebody better? I knew the girls in my time. And what fine girls there were then! all dead — yes, yes, every man of them, dead years ago now. Poor things, poor things! There was Kate Fitzgerald. You are never content, because you live in the future. Girls are fond of giving themselves the future as a present, I know."

Here he chuckled, as if he was content with his pun.

"But, sir, you must have misunderstood," she began.

"Eh, what, what? Misunderstood the girls?" he said crossly. "I read them all like a book."

"It was Lord Downpatrick, I meant."

"What, what?" he said. "Downpatrick misunderstand girls? Nonsense, child, non-

The Spanish Wine

sense — why he is a dog with the girls — that young fellow; yes, yes — and so was I in my time."

"I meant you misunderstood Lord Downpatrick," she said pettishly.

"Downpatrick?" he said gruffly. "Nonsense! don't say anything more, — there's a good girl. The diamonds are yours: they have been long enough wasted. Since Kitty died, I never wanted to see them. Blithe Kitty Fitzgerald, gentle and kind Kitty Fitzgerald! That was before your mother was born. And now the diamonds are yours," he said, as he turned hobbling away. "Yes, yes," he said, as he looked back from the door, "with my love, and all that sort of thing, child, the diamonds are yours."

The first thing Jessica did, as soon as he was out of the room, was to take off her lace ruff and open her bodice, inquisitive how the diamonds would look. Seeing them there, she cried aloud in delight, and made

When All were Young

up her mind she would have to marry Downpatrick. Then she ran to the window, and held them up to the light, and could not help kissing them, she thought them so beautiful, — and now they were hers. Then her look altered: she flushed suddenly as if she was shamed, and flung them into the casket, and locked it, and so hid it away.

Once or twice, she paced her room quickly; and then sitting down in front of her looking-glass, leant her elbows on the table, and propped her chin on her hands, and stared hard at her image, as if she had not seen it before.

“Do I look a child or an idiot,” she whispered, “since they bribe me with jewels?”

The glass showed her a proud face with a high delicate nose and resolute full lips and a rounded chin and strong eyes whose hazel shadows were lit up by her anger. Reassured by that sight, she was ashamed of herself for yielding to that wily tempta-

The Spanish Wine

tion, even though it was only in secret, and for a minute at most. So she sat staring at those bright eyes in the glass; for that was one of her habits when she was all by herself: and then, before long, she began to turn her face sideways, and put her head in different poses, and pout and smile, and lean back to see the lines of her throat, and peer forward to make sure the bones under her neck were hidden now, for they showed when she was thinner than usual. Seeing there was no sign of the bones, she felt the world was not so bad after all, and began to be proud she had resisted the diamonds: and so re-fastened her bodice, and blew her silver whistle to summon her maid to do her hair for the dinner. The grave business of seeing her hair piled upon the top of her head for the first time, and the later excitement of studying its effect in the glass, and the fear it might fall or grow loose, and the wonder whether it would always feel as heavy this

When All were Young

way, took up her attention for the rest of the morning.

So, when the big bell of the Castle was rung for dinner at twelve, she went in haughtily to the Tapestry Room, and was so anxious to guess what the ladies thought of her looks, she did not think of the diamonds. And Sir Walter and Downpatrick believed she had accepted the present. The guests were all in the room: and, though of course she did not value the women's praises and endearments, it flattered her when she detected annoyance in the eyes of the girls. When the guests had taken their seats, and she found herself in her father's big chair — still in its old place by the hearth — and with that singular cup of Tara on her right, as a mark she was the queen of the banquet, she felt it was good to be young and independent of all.

It was a bright scene: for the table was thick with silver and glass, and all the people

The Spanish Wine

were clad in their finest, and the servants were hurrying, and a throng of retainers was in the rest of the room. Hidden among them, Sebastian was looking on at the feast. Downpatrick, in purple, with wonderful frills, was on her left, and Sir Walter was facing him, bending over his food, scowling, and only stopping at times to wipe his moustache, and then hacking up his meat with his knife revengefully, and clawing it with his shaky and knotted hand, as if he feared it would jump. Toby Butler, in red with gold lace on it, was off at the other side of the table between a couple of men: and either he did not trouble to speak to them, or else they disliked him, for they let him alone. Though she tried to catch his eye, it was vain; for he mooned as he did often, when he was not astir or at the side of a woman. But he was looking his best: and she was proud of his love. Now she thought of her old promise to marry him, and did not repent it.

When All were Young

Old Sir Walter stood up; and before she knew what he meant, she saw Toby look at her with despair in his face, as if he was saying good-bye. Then she knew Sir Walter was speaking about her betrothal; and she felt he had trapped her: and she was shaken by anger against him and Downpatrick.

O'Connor went on, "The Lady Jessica drinks now to her fortunate lover."

She sprang to her feet and held the cup towards Toby.

"I drink to you!" she said. "I drink to you!"

And Sebastian dashed the cup from her hand.

CHAPTER V

A TINY ADVENTURER

FROM the remembrance of that scene at the dinner, Lady Dunluce began to pass over years, as if time had been quicker or quieter than when she was young. Her marriage to Toby, and her last sight of Sir Walter, came to her mind's eye; but she skipped most other things, as a man looks across fields where every bush is familiar.

Father Francis had married them, in his chapel below, with a few Catholics by. The visitors were gone; and Sir Walter rode after them when the wedding was over.

"I gave the diamonds for your wedding," said he, "in spite of my blunder about the

A Tiny Adventurer

name of the groom. As for that wretched nephew of mine, I don't care what he does now. And it will all turn out well, if you make that young rascal keep away from the girls. Keep the diamonds in memory of a surly old man, who cared for you in his quarrelsome way."

Then he rode off wearily, as if he was ailing.

Toby won honour and fear, and was made Earl of Dunluce, and had a seat in the Council. But his work chained him, and she never set foot out of Ireland; and she wearied of Dublin, for she used to feel cramped and belittled every time she had moved in the scandal-mongering crowd. And she was as humbled when rivals gave way to her as when they did not. Their rivalry appeared to accuse her of their ambitions and strife. So she preferred living at home in the clean air of the country, and meeting no one but friends.

The Spanish Wine

Besides, in Dublin she was always pursued by much attention from men; and though she liked it herself, it used to madden her husband. Though he would have been frantic if any one had accused him of doubting her, she could see he was sore when they grew intimate with her. She was affectionate with few of her sex but some old ladies whose womanly weaknesses had been tempered by age. And it was her way not to like a man the less for admiring her. But her husband disagreed with her there: it was not easy to say whether he was more eager to quarrel with men who paid her attention, or those who let her alone.

Above all, he disliked Downpatrick, who took pains to be friends with her, lest people should think he had been grieved by her choice. Downpatrick was now his closest rival in work, and had a pleasure in thwarting him with a tender politeness; and had it all his own way in peace, but was a laggard

A Tiny Adventurer

in war, though he could risk his life calmly if he thought it was worth his while to endanger a thing he valued so much. Downpatrick would pass his time pleasantly, vexing the new Earl of Dunluce; though, if he thought he had gone too far, he would soften that fierce placable giant by a womanish sweetness. The known historical scene when the Lord Deputy Perrott ordered Dunluce under arrest, for challenging his rival across the Council board in the Castle at Dublin, put an end to all show of friendliness, and Jessica saw little of her rejected admirer.

In her home in the country, she had the life of a queen. If her husband was free, she had no lack of amusements, and found him a comrade; and their tastes were alike. The years left them lovers: and she had her way in all the things of the house, for he was glad to give up to her, and even pretended to

The Spanish Wine

like spending the evenings in the Tapestry Room by the light of the fire, as that was one of her whims; though he would privately long for candles and a pleasanter place. Because she was so used to her own way, she accepted this as a matter of course: and his boyishness with her led to her being astonished when others looked up to him; for though proud of his fame, and glad to know people called him "The Great Earl," she would think of him as a big-hearted school-boy, likely to make blunders unless he took her advice. Though she did not think he saw this, he understood it; and so made it a rule to ask her opinion when he was sure it would coincide with his own, and took her advice about the people he tried in the justice-hall, because she was merciful, and he was always inclined to let prisoners go, no matter what they had done.

So time went by: and they were honoured and childless. Each privately looked down

A Tiny Adventurer

on the other's mind, and meant to humour its weakness. Jessica credited people with her lofty and narrow nature, and if she heard of their failings, would find the stories incredible. So, seeing her husband's faults, she had to think him a boy, and was eager to pardon him like a merciful mother, while he expected her worship. Dunluce thought he knew others, if once he was aware of their sins. With his jovial dislike of prim and Puritan ways, he thought stricter men hypocrites, and said honour alone kept wholesome women from following the paths of their brothers; yet, in his heart, he put his wife on a pinnacle of unapproachable virtue. Understanding most men and some women, he was prone to be jealous on account of her goodness; for, accustomed to different caresses, he feared she had not been wakened to love; and her reserve was as strange to him as her liking for solitude; since he never suspected how she longed to be doing

The Spanish Wine

great things, as others did in those times when Elizabeth ruled, and nearer home, Ineen Dhu — "The Dark Daughter" — was leading Tyr-conal's passionate clans. She so dreaded his patronising and kind laugh, she would not speak of her fancies: and he no more knew her unrest than he could make out why she winced if she heard a child wawl in its ragged mother's thin arms in a smoky hut in the fields.

One fine morning in May, Jessica and her husband went out for a canter into the forest: and after riding together a long time under the leaves, they heard a child singing beyond a tangle of boughs. The words he was singing, as she afterwards came to know them, were these:

"When roses sulk, and bow the head,
My heart forgets the rainy skies,
Clarissa; for it seeks instead,
The roses where your cheeks are red,
And lasting summer in your eyes."

A Tiny Adventurer

Then, at a turn of the woody path, they discovered a very small boy trotting towards them on a fagged and uncouth pony, and looking as if he wanted to lift his failing heart with his song.

Seeing them, he drew himself up, and was silent, and tried to look like a man, and spurred his pony to pass them. The quiet wind lifted his black cloak and his curls. Dunluce caught hold of the pony's bridle, and looked down at the boy.

"Who are you, my little man?" he said kindly.

"Hugh O'Carroll," the child said, reddening, and laying hold of a dagger. "And who are you, may I ask?"

"And where are you going?"

"I am going to serve under the Great Earl," said the child, haughtily. "Let go of my reins," he went on, and, pulling them free, he rode away through the forest.

Dunluce only laughed, and said he would

The Spanish Wine

be proud to be helped by such a tiny adventurer. But Jessica was wistful and silent all the rest of the ride.

When they got home, they saw the boy seated in the guardroom in a throng of the troopers, and he seemed at his ease, as if he was experienced in war.

From the Tapestry Room they sent for him; and though he appeared a little surprised, he did not think of excuses, and seemed to consider Dunluce had been in the wrong. Being asked for his story, he said he was one of the O'Carrolls of Cloyne, and his father and mother were dead, and he had made up his mind to go in search of his fortune; and so, starting in the prime of the morning, had saddled his pony secretly and ridden away. When they wanted to know why he had come, he answered his mother had spoken much of Dunluce.

"And where did you learn that song?" said Dunluce.

A Tiny Adventurer

"My mother taught me," he answered.

"What was her maiden name?" said Dunluce eagerly, flushing a little.

"I don't know," the boy answered loftily, with an air of indifference, as if to be an O'Carroll was enough for his pride.

"I wonder who she was," said Dunluce; and he stared long at the child.

"Did you meet nobody in the forest?" said Jessica.

"Only a few robbers," the boy said; "wood-kern, you know. But I have a dagger, and so they were afraid to attack me."

"Sir," said Dunluce, as if his visitor was his equal in age, "I only regret you did not come to me years ago."

"But, my lord, I want —" said the boy.

"My dear Mr. O'Carroll, wait a short time, and I dare say you 'll have more than you want."

"But, my lord, my duties —" the boy said; but Dunluce broke in airily:

The Spanish Wine

"Pleasure first, my dear man, and duty afterwards always. If you 'll excuse me now, Mr. O'Carroll, I have a duty that waits."

With that, he left them, and sent a messenger riding to the O'Carrolls of Cloyne. An answer came from them saying the boy's story was true; but it did not add anything about wanting him back.

Jessica had grown to be fond of him, and he took to her also; though he did not like her to kiss him if there was any one by, and made a point of her not calling him Hughie. In her heart, she was making believe he was a child of her own. So he was kept as her page; but only consented on her promise to let him go to the wars when people thought he was old enough. For his part, he considered he was old enough then.

That winter they travelled to Dublin; for, as there had been plots and many murders of late, she was afraid to let her husband go

A Tiny Adventurer

off. Her heart sank at the sight of the ramparts and the ominous towers of the Castle in the clustering roofs.

A foreboding was on her, and every time he went out alone, she would stand at her withdrawing-room window in Dame Street as he swaggered away, as if he challenged the world. From watching him so, she came to notice a little woman in black who lurked often in the passage between the houses in front until Dunluce had gone by. This woman's face was always hid by a shawl, and she used to keep in the shadow. But Dunluce laughed when he heard of it, and said he did not think it was strange if the girls wanted to see him.

One day, when there was snow on the ground, Dunluce went off with a boy in front to light the road with a torch. It was dusk; but as the lamps on the ropes across the street were not lit, the torch reddened the rafters under the stories of the opposite

The Spanish Wine

house, and flung a glare into the passage beside. Jessica, at the window with Hugh, looked over to see if the same woman was hiding, and saw a couple of fellows, who shrank away from the light.

Dunluce stopped in the road, and the link-boy went on, and left the passage in darkness. The men followed, and a gleam of the light was on the blades of their swords. She would have shrieked vainly to her husband, but could not, as they ran forward with silent feet in the snow: and then she heard a faint cry of "Theobald," and the woman in black was there in the road, lifting her arms as if she uttered a warning. Dunluce stopped for a second, but then he strode on; for he remembered the talk of a lurking woman, and thought it must be somebody he had formerly known, and he did not choose to encounter her in front of his house. His tall figure was black against the flare of the torch, and the men were upon him: but

A Tiny Adventurer

another voice cried, "My lord!" shrilly; and there was Hugh racing along the road in the dusk. That minute, the men closed on Dunluce; but he turned round at the call, and parried the first thrust with his cloak, and then his sword was at work.

The boy with the light turned, and it was full on the struggle. Dunluce had not seen the second man, who now leapt at him from behind, with a thrust. But Hugh sprang up, clutching the fellow's arms at the back; and the man, flinging him off, turned upon that tiny antagonist.

The child had been thrown, but was up again instantly, with his dagger in hand. That redoubtable weapon did not have to be used, for the first attacker was down. In a minute, Dunluce was sheathing his sword, and the light was red on a man prone in the street, and another huddled and limp against the side of the house, as a doll lies when it is flung in a corner.

The Spanish Wine

Dunluce stooped, and shook hands solemnly with his little ally.

"Mr. O'Carroll," said he, "you are a promising soldier. From this, we will be brothers in arms. But now you must run back to the house."

CHAPTER VI

IN THE DAYS OF THE SIEGE

AFTER remembering that fight in the dusk, Lady Dunluce did not linger on the following years. But they had taken her youth, and friends too, for old Sir Walter had gone down on a lost field, when Sir Brian of the Ramparts rebelled in Fifteen Hundred and Ninety, and a servant had found Father Francis at his table one morning, bending over a book, as if he studied in death.

As time had gone by, Hugh O'Carroll had grown so dear to her husband and to her, they would say he was a son of the house. She would have given all she had for a son like him; but pretended to pity mothers for their afflictions and pain. Hugh was comely and

The Spanish Wine

tall, and Dunluce and he were never asunder : and she liked watching them ; for she was proud of her husband's young ways and untired heart, and in spite of her calmer subdued spirit, felt often she had not really changed, and was still the child who denied Shamus, and repented so soon, and the girl who stood drinking her lover's health at the table. The old chair she was sitting on now, was her father's : he had lifted her on it when she owned to her love for Shamus : she had pushed it away when she stood raising the cup. The round room was the same, though the tapestry was ghostly and dim. Hugh had caught so much of her husband's manner, he reminded her often of her girlhood, and watching him, in that room, she would sometimes start at his respect as he spoke to her, when she had almost forgotten she was now a stiff and sedate woman with much grey in her hair.

These two were her world ; for, though

In the Days of the Siege

she was too proud to be scornful, and professed to believe all folk of a gentle birth were equal, she privately thought her husband and Hugh and she were apart, but that was a thing she would not avow to herself. As for her servants, they liked her at first, for she was gentle and grave; but after a time they were aware of the gap she fancied between them, and then their hearts were turned away from her also. Kindness could have easily made them slavish and loving, but she was always aloof: they worshipped her husband, though he had been known to pitch one of them out of a window in a moment of hastiness; but they served her with glum reverence, and it chilled her at times, just as she was hurt when a dog did not seem to take to her much. When she was young she had been devoted to children; but it was said now she avoided them, and this got her the name of an unnatural woman.

All this time, Ireland had staggered along

The Spanish Wine

the bitter and black road of her destiny, hoping still for the day that was never going to dawn. The doom of the race was darkening in tragical years. Jessica stood aloof from the agonies of the conquered; but her husband had shared in causing them, and had ridden among his kinsmen in the Wasting of Desmond, when the Black Earl hunted the Crippled Geraldine through the snowy woods in the winter. Now the kilted and mantled clans were up again in the North, at the call of Red Hugh's pibroch, and Downpatrick, disgraced at Court for not succeeding in poisoning Perrott, had joined the rebels at last. So it had come about, he was besieging the Castle. Then she fell in remembrance of those battering days of the siege, and a stormy afternoon a week ago now.

The siege lasted months: and the sallies and the assaults and the attempts to storm the Castle at night and the clatter of mus-

In the Days of the Siege

ketry had broken her; for, though she was brave in other things, she was terrified at the noise of a gun, and the volleys crashed at all hours, and when there was stillness she expected another, and never heard one without an ache at her heart, unless her husband was beside her with Hugh. And she often fancied her fear would have been less if she had been able to help.

Then, in these moaning days of November, the food began to give out, and the only hope of relief lay in the coming of ships promised from England; for Downpatrick was holding the land, but had no vessels at sea. So she spent most her time at the window looking over the water; and her husband was silent, and his moonish wandering fits became more frequent than ever, and his old fear of the dark grew on him, till she dreaded to think what he might do if at last he was overcome by Downpatrick.

That old tendency of hers to look down on

The Spanish Wine

him a little and feel she could do better herself, now made her wish he would let her treat with the enemy and arrange for a truce. But she was aware he would only deal with Downpatrick with a sword; and this angered her the more, since she counted that courtier as a friend, and was sure she could do anything with him as he liked her so much. Not absence nor the burden of time could alter Jessica's friendship. If she could stop the siege by her influence, she would do more than the men after all, and her pride would not be stung by her uselessness. And all this seemed the sadder, since she was certain the quarrel was one-sided, as no one could hate a soldier as handsome and as kind as her husband.

Much of her time was spent alone with the dwarf, for she had sent her women away before the siege had begun: but she hardly heeded him more than a dog; and he would

In the Days of the Siege

move in the room noiselessly in his sandals, and sit in the window and mutter there by the hour, and had always that look as if he waited for something.

One desolate evening she was trying to read by the window, for the room had been darkened by a curtain of rain; but her fears knocked at her heart, and she could not drive them away.

The dwarf crouched on the bench of the window, and he talked to himself softly, and at times she could hear.

"A fine lad Master Hugh is," muttered the dwarf, "an' his father's image to-day."

At this she was startled, for she could not imagine what the dwarf knew of the O'Carrolls of Cloyne.

"A sore pity it is," he went on, "he is not lawfully born."

Then he muttered again, after a pause, "It is a gran' lord he would be, if he was Earl of Dunluce."

The Spanish Wine

The rain hammered the window: and the tapestry was thrashing the wall. Then the room grew as still as if the weather was fine; and it passed from her eyes, and she saw Hugh, and then her husband instead. "It is a lie," she cried inwardly; "I will not believe it." But she was quite sure it was true. Why, if she needed a proof of it, she had only to look at them; they were so much alike. As things came to her now, she thought she must have been blind. Perhaps every one else knew it and made a mock of her ignorance.

Then she heard them laughing together as they came into the room; but she bent over her book, as if she did not know they were there.

"Lord, what a studious little woman!" her husband said. "What can have come over you, Jess? I am afraid we disturb you."

She looked up slowly, as if she made

In the Days of the Siege

herself do it. For a moment, she watched them, and then the big volume fell on the floor, and she sank back in a faint.

When she came to herself, they were beside her; and, as she opened her eyes, she saw that likeness again. Getting up feebly, she made light of her weakness, and saying she would rest for a little, went below to her room. For an hour or so, she lay on her bed, with her eyes open and hard, without a sign of a tear.

Then she went back quietly, resolved to go on as if the thing was a lie, and found her husband and Hugh worried and unselfishly kind. Dunluce said she was tired and would be well in the morning. But Hugh noticed her endeavours to meet his eyes with the familiar affection. Now, his eyes were just the same as her husband's.

All night she was awake, while her room echoed the sea's useless and irresponsible anger. There was no thought in her of

The Spanish Wine

blaming her husband, but her resentment made a scapegoat of Hugh.

In the following days, Hugh thought he had offended her deeply without meaning it; and so he was wretched. Dunluce, seeing her coldness, wondered, but soon made up his mind he understood her completely; for he set store on his knowledge of women, and considered them whimsical and hysterical children. So now he decided she had a whim to be jealous of his affection for Hugh; for when he set about understanding women, he thought first of the theory that would flatter him most. So to disarm her, he resolved to be cold to him, and, being an indifferent actor, overdid it, till Hugh believed he had forfeited the love of his friends.

Hugh was proud also, and Dunluce, growing angry with himself and his wife, and seeking a chance to divert his indignation, persuaded himself the younger man sulked,

In the Days of the Siege

and so was distant and harsh with him. Things were going from bad to worse with the three who had been so happy together, when Hugh was killed in a sally, charging with a desperate courage, as if he wanted to die.

That had been only yesterday morning; and when her husband came in, after the fighting was done, they did not speak about Hugh, but their eyes met for a moment. That was enough for her to see he was old: an hour had outdone the patient work of the years. Wanting to make friends with him then, and let the past be forgotten, she said to him,

"I am going to Hugh now. Will you come with me, dear?"

It was in her mind to speak out, and let him see she had learnt the story, and had forgiven it all. But he shook his head silently: and she went there alone.

All that night, she sat up by the fireside in

The Spanish Wine

the Tapestry Room, waiting for him to come from the ramparts. Now she pitied him so, she was unwilling to sleep till the estrangement was over. The plodding hands of the clock crept till the dawn whitened the windows.

Then the dwarf stole into the room, like a shadow in that unnatural light: and she was turning her weary eyes from him, forgetting his presence, when he gave her a letter stealthily, as if it was secret.

"Who is it from?" she said, as she looked down at the seal.

"My Lord Downpatrick," he replied in a whisper.

"Lord Downpatrick," she cried, and hope came to her, as she thought of her dream of making terms for a truce.

Breaking the silk thread and the seal, she stooped, holding the letter sideways to the glimmering fire. But she could make nothing out; till the dwarf took a burning stick

In the Days of the Siege

from the hearth, and held it close to the page.

So she read the letter, and found it the very thing she desired; for in it Downpatrick said he had been bitterly pained by opposing her, and would be able to prove his friendship if he met her in private. It would be better, he went on, if her husband should not know of the meeting till after; his unfortunate prejudice would be sure to prevent it. There need be no danger for her, said he, and he would count it an honour to risk his life in her service, and had not forgotten the old and happy days in the Castle.

The last words of the letter touched her, and as she read them a watchman came hurrying with news of a sail.

“A ship?” she said.

“No, a small boat,” said he, “and shall I waken his lordship?”

“My lord is not up?”

“Your ladyship, he has gone to his room.”

The Spanish Wine

"You must not trouble him yet," she said, and she went down to the watergate, and stood on the steps, with the dwarf on her left and a group of soldiers behind her.

The sun rose over the sullen rim of the sea, casting a golden net in the water. A boat came sailing to land, rising and falling dolefully as if it was sighing. That old dream of a lover arriving in a galleon at dawn, came to her as if it was something she had read in a book.

A watchman, high on the walls, challenged the boat, and a voice answered: "A friend."

The sail was like foam, and then dusky, though its edge had a gleam, while the mast and the deck were in the flush of the dawn. A wavering shadow under the bows appeared to sink in the sea.

The sail wrinkled and fell: and then two people in black — a monk with a little woman beside him — were erect in the boat. As it

In the Days of the Siege

slid to the steps, where the flush lingered on the backs of the waves, the dwarf fastened the prow to a rusty ring in the weeds.

"I come from Inishowen," the monk said quietly to Lady Dunluce.

"Your blessing, father," she said, kneeling, and he put out his hand over her, as he stepped from the boat.

"And this woman has come to seek your shelter," he said.

"She is welcome," she answered, rising, with a glance at the other.

The sight of the woman reminded her of the watcher who lurked in Dame Street; and with that, she remembered her troubles, so she turned to the dwarf and said:

"You can tell my lord I shall meet him."

CHAPTER VII

OUT OF THE PAST

AS Lady Dunluce thought of these things, the clock struck ten on the landing; and, rising, she turned to the door, and saw the tapestry fluttering like fantastical banners. The glow of the fire struck it, and brought the figures to life. Those shadows of kings menaced her, and motioned her back, as she was crossing the room: and the feel of the worm-eaten tapestry, as she drew it aside, was unlike it had been in her womanhood, and thrilled her as if she was only a child and half afraid of the Furies. Looking back at the room, she remembered how she would linger, and say good-night to it and good-bye to the fire, at bedtime, when she was small.

Out of the Past

Taking the torch from the open frame on the landing, she went down: and the wind hustled her and howled in her ears, as she turned into the corridor.

There, on the left, she saw the door of the chapel, and heard some one inside. Looking in, she saw it all in the dark, but for a yellow lamp dangling from the roof on a chain in front of the altar, and shaken so by the wind, its dusky light was uncertain and swayed on the monk as he sat facing her under it, with Dunluce on his left, kneeling as if he went to confession. She could only see the left side of her husband's face: and the monk's eyes were in the dusk of his cowl.

"Bless me, father, for I have sinned," said Dunluce.

The monk blessed him, and said, after a pause,

"How long is it since your last confession, my child?"

The Spanish Wine

Dunluce whispered an answer.

"A long time," said the monk, sadly: and as he folded his hands, and leant his ear to Dunluce, their heads were just on a level.

"And since then, of what sins do you accuse yourself to God, my dear child?"

Dunluce bowing his head, began to whisper the answer. The monk said nothing, but nodded from time to time to show he could hear.

At first, she was almost incredulous, and then she was chilled by a fear, for she remembered her husband's forebodings, and fancied he was preparing for death. Religion had been nothing to him since his boyhood: and though she had witnessed many confessions — for it was the custom to make them publicly, while the penitent's whispers were only heard by the priest — this one appeared unnatural; as since she was married she had forgotten her creed, for it humbled her, and the bent of her mind was to definite

Out of the Past

action, and the dreams of a saint were as alien as a passion for books.

Then the monk spoke in that quavering and monotonous voice:

"For your penance you will say three 'Our Fathers': and now if your repentance is true, you can count on God's forgiveness, and I, as his minister and in His name, shall repeat the Absolution," he said.

The monk repeated the Latin words, and gave the blessing, and said, "Go in peace, and pray for me," at the end.

Then they stood face to face: and the light gushed on them both. The monk put his right hand on the Earl's left shoulder, and said, in a voice that was little more than a whisper:

"I am that woman's brother, my lord."

"You!" cried Dunluce, stepping back.

"Go in peace, and pray for me," said the monk again; and he turned quietly, and came to the door.

The Spanish Wine

Going down the desolate corridor, she turned to the left, into a narrow and darker passage, and went quickly, and would not let herself think. Pausing, when she came under the fourth window-slit, and feeling the wall, she opened a secret door and went in.

The monk followed her, and came to the place. Groping on the clammy and rough wall, he found a knob, and a door swung silently, and the noise of the wind and the water was doubled: but at first he could see nothing; and then, as he got used to the blackness, he looked down upon stairs. The wind blew cold on his eyes, as he stepped in and shut the ponderous door.

There it was pitch dark; and the thunder of the surf was below. The wind blew his robe backward, as if somebody tugged him. The steps were mossy and deep: and groping on the slippery walls, and feeling the way stealthily with his feet, he went down.

Out of the Past

At last, he saw a dim glow, and then he was at the foot of the stairs. There she stood, with her back to him: and the gleam of her torch was tossing broken on waves. The sea was roofed by a cavern, and swung to and fro in it, with hissing and panting: and on the opposite side was a rugged hole like an arch.

As he looked at that opening, it was shut for a moment. Then something black had passed in, and was coming over the sea.

The flare of a torch reddened it, and proved it to be a boat rowed by the dwarf, with a man in a slouched hat and a cloak, erect in the bows, holding the light in his left hand, and a long sword in his other. Birds woke at that glare, and called and flapped about in the roof.

The monk drew away, and steadied himself with his left hand on the rock. "But he is dead!" he cried inwardly. "My God! it is Downpatrick himself!"

The Spanish Wine

The man with the torch sheathed his sword quietly, and saluted the Countess. As he stood so, the light was strong on his face, and showed it comely and calm. Turning, he said a word to the dwarf; and then, leaning his torch against the side of the boat, stepped lightly out on the rocks.

As the golden spurs clanked, the monk said to himself:

"It is Downpatrick indeed: then the tale of his death was only one of his tricks. What mischief brings him here now?"

"It was so good of you to come," said Downpatrick, bowing over her hand.

"Indeed, I owe you my thanks," she said.

"How charming of you to say so!" said he.

"The danger—" she began; but he broke in on her sweetly:

"Dear lady, no danger exists for me when I am trying to serve you. My heart is always the same."

Out of the Past

"Yes," the monk muttered, "that is likely enough."

"You were always so kind," she said, as she thought of the long years of his faithfulness. After all, she knew she had given him encouragement, and so she had pitied his loneliness often, and had wished she could find him a loving wife as a comfort.

"What daring hopes I had in the old times!" said Downpatrick, with a heart-broken sigh. "But they faded, as the islands of sunset are dim in the dusk and blown away on the sea. Ah! how I suffered when my delusion was over!"

"You suffered?" said she, and gazed at him with motherly pity.

With his hair smoothly divided in the middle and curled, he was as dainty as ever. His gay doublet sat stiffly, as if there was a cuirass beneath it. The light was on the jewelled elaborate dagger he had worn in his youth.

The Spanish Wine

"I have spent my life in the dark," said he. "You were the sunny window of a desolate heart. I used to call you Aurora. Do you remember the foolish verses I made, and used to sing to the lute?"

"Why, you wrote beautiful verses," she said.

"Indeed they came from my heart. That little song now — it was sadly prophetic."

With this he began repeating a verse:

" 'In the sun, at the place of the ships,
I toil for the Moors.
My heart is a bird, and my lips
Are in fever for yours.' "

"Oh, yes; it was charming," said she;
"and I remember the rest of it:

" 'My soul is a desert apart,
And dies for the rains.
I wish they could conquer my heart,
And control it with chains.' "

"Have they come to this place to cap verses at the dead of the night?" said the

Out of the Past

monk to himself; and he glanced away, and saw the dwarf plying about at the other end of the cavern, with the torch's reflection trailing and fluttering alongside on the water. The clamouring of the wind and the sea was so loud, it was difficult to follow the speakers: and now Downpatrick went on in a tender voice, and his words were very hard to distinguish. As Downpatrick sank on one knee, and put her hand to his lips, the monk turned and began to go up the stairs in the dark.

Dunluce was still at his prayers, as the monk came into the chapel and stood behind him a moment.

"My lord, I want you to come with me," said the monk in a whisper.

Dunluce would have spoken, but the monk led the way silently across to a room.

The room was square, with but little furniture; and the walls had a cover of spoilt

The Spanish Wine

and meaningless tapestry in a ruin from age. Spring, and bright woods, and little children at play in fields and gathering cowslips in wicker baskets, were once the theme of the tapestry; but now they were gone. Hugh lay on a bed between the door and the hearth: and beyond it a little woman in black was kneeling with her face in her hands, as she was bowed on the pillow. Heaped ashes were cold on the hearth: and there was nothing to light the room but a candle, that shone on the dark stream of her hair, and on Hugh's gauntleted crossed hands, for he was clad as he fell, as if he had been too tired to undress and was lying down for a little.

The woman was still, as the monk stopped at her right.

"I have come at last," he said gently.

Rising, she turned feebly towards him, and put her arms round his neck.

Dunluce came close to the bed, and folded his arms, as he looked down upon Hugh.

Out of the Past

Death had taken manhood away from that pleasant quieted face : he could almost believe the child he met on the grassy road in the greenwood was before him again.

"That is not a stone you are looking at : that is your son," said the woman, as, keeping her right hand on the monk's shoulder, she pointed down towards Hugh. She had a babyish worn face, and she looked wearied to death.

"Clarissa!" cried Dunluce, stepping back. "Can it be you? Clarissa!—what does this mean?"

"It means we meet at last by our child."

"But his mother was dead."

"I made them think I was dead, or he would never have gone."

"But I don't understand," said Dunluce, passing his hand over his eyes.

"When you — when you went away to the wars, there was no child in my home," she

The Spanish Wine

said, in a faint and indifferent voice, as if it hurt her to speak. "Have you forgotten me so, you think I'd have used his birth as a plea to bring you back in reluctance?"

"But you never said a word," said Dunluce, as if he spoke in a dream.

"I had kept my secret to tell when you were kinder again."

"If you had only told me!"

"Did you tell me you were going?" said she.

"I don't ask you to forgive me," he said, heavily, and looked down as he spoke. "I sinned beyond forgiveness, I know. I was young—"

"Oh! enough of that!" she broke in; "young, and a man—that explains and justifies everything."

Sinking back in a chair, she hid her eyes with her hand.

Lady Dunluce stepped on the threshold, lifting up the tapestry screen with her right

Out of the Past

hand; but the men had their backs to her, so nobody saw her.

Dunluce went on: "I loved you indeed."

"We were very young, and I loved you. I had no one to help me, for I was always alone — a little woman," Clarissa said, "a weak woman."

"Hugh was the son of my heart," he said, "and so I am punished."

"I knew you loved him, when I saw you in Dublin. He was a son to be proud of, and I was a loving wife to you, Theobald."

"Oh! Merciful God! His wife!" Lady Dunluce cried inwardly, and, drawing away, let go the tapestry screen.

"If I could do you justice —" Dunluce began; but then the monk interrupted him.

"It is not your turn to do justice: it is too late for that, Lord Dunluce."

"As for you, sir," said Dunluce, "you might remember how you heard of the secret."

"From your own lips."

The Spanish Wine

"And from a confession."

"And from what you said now," said the monk, coldly. "I came here for revenge, but I had altered my mind: and now I see Fate had left my planning superfluous. This death lies on your soul — and your wife is meeting Downpatrick."

"Yes — I have killed my son," said Dunluce softly, as if he spoke to himself.

"You pay no heed to what I said of the Countess."

"As for that, some one has misled you, of course."

"I saw her with my own eyes."

"The man is dead."

"I know him well."

"And I know my wife."

"Your wife?" said Clarissa, looking up at him. "Yes, I am your wife after all." While they had been speaking, her mind had been away in dim thoughts of her little fluttering life, as it went sometimes at night

Out of the Past

when she was falling asleep. Exhausted utterly now, she felt like a bird belated in winter meadows and blown about by a storm.

"How well you are looking!" she said. "Is that the old ring you are wearing?"

"The same signet," he said, as if his thoughts were aloof.

"You used to let me wear it at times," she said. "You wanted me to keep it, you know. I took only this other ring, and the roses you gathered in the wood by the hill. I should like to see the old house, and all the lilac in front. You came on me once as I was gathering lilac;—do you remember I dropped it all at your feet?"

Her voice had sunk as she spoke: and Dunluce looked again at the calm face on the pillow. It seemed to him now as if he and Hugh had been living as father and son, though they did not know their relationship; and the remembrances of that love were the dearer to him, because it had grown in their

The Spanish Wine

hearts without beginning in duty. It was not in his nature to dwell at all on the past; but now he forgot the present hour in that mistiness, when his mind became mazed, groping as if it had lost its way in a fog. And through his tangled emotions ran a blind protest, as if he was not wholly to blame; since, when first he had come back from abroad, he had intended to learn what had become of Clarissa, till Jessica's choice had cut him off from the past. For a moment the old house on the hill flashed on him, as he had seen it in flames, when he had come on his followers burning it in the Wasting of Desmond.

"And you gave me verses," she said. "You made some about roses, — how was this they began? —

" 'When roses sulk, and bow the head.'

If you look at me now, you will seek in vain for the roses."

Out of the Past

Then she was silent: and for a moment, the scene changed to her as she looked at the ashes. Young flames were climbing eagerly on a similar hearth. She was young also, and at work in their gleam, listening to the splash of the rain in the lilac, and starting happily if the wind was like hoofs or an eager knock at the gate. Then came a knock at the wooden door in the ivy. As she hid her treasure of baby-clothes and tidied her hair, she knew her husband had come to her, and was loving again. A pretty babyish face with red cheeks and great eyes shone on her from the shadowy looking-glass. And she ran to the door, and saw her father instead.

"Father sat reading, and said you had gone over to England," she said to Dunluce, as if she had been thinking aloud. "I was still as a stone. 'Maybe it's for the best, child,' he said, as he turned over a page and bent again to his book. 'Maybe it's for the

The Spanish Wine

best, after all." He never knew of our marriage, for he died of the chill he had taken out in the rain."

"When I came home," the monk said, as he stood watching her gravely, with his hands clasped in his long sleeves, "and walked across, in the dark, to surprise the father and you, I found the door on the latch, and looked and saw you nursing the child. You stood up, shielding him, and I thought you were fainting. I read it all in your eyes."

"And you came over, and held me fast in your arms."

The short candle had guttered, and left the bed in a shadow. That still face looked hardened and old, and Dunluce could see its likeness to his.

"Sometimes," the monk went on, "I have thought I was wrong when I took you to live with our cousins, the O'Carrolls of Cloyne. You would not tell me your story: but they

Out of the Past

gave you a home, because they found you in sorrow."

Said Dunluce: "You saw us in Dublin?"

"I have been there for years. There was never a day I did not look for your coming. Once I saw you attacked, and I attempted to warn you. I lived when you loved me: I think I have been dead since you went."

"If you had only told me in time! Rather than see him lie here," said Dunluce.

"Don't touch him!" she cried, with a sudden shrillness of voice.

Dunluce drew back a little.

"If you had let me know, when he came —"

"That would have been asking a favour from you, or claiming a right. Besides, I did not want to betray you. You would have been forced to tell it all to the Countess. I knew how all he did would delight you: besides, you would have been kind to a starving dog at your door."

The Spanish Wine

"But why did not you keep him?" the monk said.

"Every one thought him illegitimate: and the people were rough. There he would have hated me afterwards, when he knew the reproach. I sent him for his sake and for yours," she said, as she looked up at Dunluce.

"For mine?" said he.

"I made you his hero, and told him to look to you, when he wanted a friend, and to go to you if I died. I never thought of you without longing and kindness. It was my fault if you got tired of me soon."

He answered, "I am punished enough."

The monk said, "And you left him at Cloyne?"

"I had news of my death sent, but came back secretly, and hid with the kern."

"In the forest?"

"Yes, and when he set out, I kept as near as I could to him all the time, in the tangle. When you and the Countess met him, I was

Out of the Past

hidden behind a thicket of hazel," she said, as she turned again to Dunluce. "You looked happy and young: and I felt so old, and I was tattered with briars."

Said the monk: "You wrote to me Hugh was dead, and you had left the O'Carrolls."

"I could tell no one the secret."

"If I could help you now—" said Dunluce.

"Help me?" she said, standing up, facing him with a light in her eyes. "And if I was humble at last, what could you do? Now we have met, I cannot live without seeing you: I must know you are near. And yet I would rather you never saw me again: for your eyes hurt me too much. Now you can give me nothing but death. Oh!" she said, wincing, "how well I know that look in your eyes! In the old days, I understood it so well, and knew you said to yourself, 'Just like a woman — posing, and ranting, and hysterical always.' But I meant all I said then: and with all my

The Spanish Wine

heart I mean this—Dear, give me death!” she cried, stretching her clasped hands to him, over that white face on the pillow.

“My lord, I came here planning revenge—” the monk said.

But a crash of battle, with cries of “Treachery!” woke along the ramparts and moat. As Clarissa started, the candle was knocked away from the table.

“Treachery!” repeated Dunluce, drawing his sword, and then he lunged, crying “Stand!” as he could hear the monk stir. A gleam flashed through the window, and sprang along the blade of the sword. A weight was thrust on the sword, and dragged it down: and Dunluce felt the point fast in something, and drew back, and struck out. A dusky stream of the torchlight flooded the black room: and he saw Clarissa lying before him.

“Dear! you have given me death, after all,” she cried, clasping his knees.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN ALL WERE OLD

THE room was darkened again, but the monk groped for the candle, and, lighting it, put it back on the table. Then laying the flint down on the mantelpiece quietly, he turned to Dunluce.

Dunluce had flung his sword on the ground, and had the look of a man in a nightmare, who has a lingering doubt in his terror and a hope to awake.

The monk stooped, and lifted his sister up in his arms, and laid her down on the bed, so that her face was beside her son's on the pillow.

The Spanish Wine

"If I had died, she would have been broken by grief," he said, as if he spoke to himself. "I had a heart once, I remember."

Then he looked across at Dunluce gravely, without any emotion.

"I was right," said he, "when I felt Fate had left my planning superfluous."

Dunluce looked at him with a haggard and set face, and had no thought but a wish to be alone with the dead, for his heart had been stunned, and there was nothing of grief in it, but only a dazed longing for solitude, as if he could not come to himself while there was any one by.

"And I was right in what I said of your wife," the monk went on, with the same dreary insistence. "I dare say you would find them together, if you came with me now."

"I'll go," said Dunluce abruptly, for he could not abide the man's indifference there, and felt a need to get rid of him and come back alone.

When All were Old

"Your sword?" said the monk.

Dunluce shook his head with a shudder, and was turning away; but the monk handed it to him, and said:

"Perhaps you will need it."

There was something white by the threshold. The monk picked up a lace handkerchief.

"She must have come to the door," he said to himself. "I wonder what she has heard."

Said he to Dunluce: "I think she is in the Tapestry Room."

Meanwhile, Lady Dunluce went quietly to the Tapestry Room, as if her servants were looking. Keeping her thoughts back on the way, as if she was holding her breath, she heard a childish voice whisper: "I was a loving wife to you, Theobald."

Putting the torch into the frame on the landing, she went into the room: it looked altered, and she shrank from it, turning to

The Spanish Wine

the window on the right of the door, and pulled it open and stared out at the sea.

The wind was like a mother's hand, cool on the fevered brow of a child. For a faltering moment, she wished her mother was there. Then remembering her mother was only a delicate wistful girl of twenty, she turned from the thought of seeking comfort from one who would be like a daughter beside her.

"I am too old to be weak," she said to herself, and attempted to set her mind on the sea, and recalled how it had been always before her—like a great hope—though she had never put out on it. Countries and stirring life were beyond it, and always out of her reach. And all the time, it was muttering in caverns under her home, just as her life had been undermined—but at this thought she drew back, and compelled herself to think of her childish fancy to be a ship's figure-head and travel for ever.

When All were Old

Was it her up-bringing among outlaws, or the blood of that reckless clan of the North — those adventurers and lovers of horses — filled her with such a longing for freedom? All at once, she could see herself a child with Red James when he had showed her the Castle. “What is that house, Shamus?” she asked. “It is a prison,” said he. What had her life been but a long imprisonment in this rainy and wild land in the garrisons of a murderous war? The world had called her a great lady; and that deference stung her like a jeer at her lot. Did Gillian’s weakness for kisses interfere with the toils of the dairy? and was Peter the pot-boy duly respectful to the nineteenth assistant cook? and was the scullery clean? — these and such solemn enquiries were the task of her life. The cringing of fine gentlemen seeking a share of her shelter, or a knife at her meals, the gaping awe of dishevelled wretches abashed by her magnificence, haunted her as if they were

The Spanish Wine

insults. The starved woman that glowered at her from the door of the hovel in the field of the oaks was happier, for she was content if the rain did not come through the thatch and it was well with the pig, and she knew what it was to hold her child to her heart.

Then she tried again to master her thoughts, and said to herself: "What was it Downpatrick was saying just now about a river of moonlight flooding the misty plain of the sea, and shining on the watery shingle, as if a treasure of silver lace had come ashore with the tide? That was as we were riding along the sands where the pebbles under the waves were like the glittering scales of fishes, — but it was not to-night, and it was ages ago." It was strange to her now with what clearness she remembered Downpatrick, as he was then, and how Sebastian became vivid, with his timorous manner, and his spotted and frayed doublet, and his narrow twitching repentant face, as he read to her

When All were Old

in his monotonous voice, or blinked at her with affectionate eyes, so sodden and sore it used to hurt her to meet them. His voice came to her now with a tenderness she used to neglect. She remembered how he would call her "stern child of a stern father, Antigone," if her temper was quick.

With that thought, she could see her father again, and he was just in her place. The Castle rose as a symbol of his life and of hers, between the delusive sea and the unfortunate hills, and redoubtable, and sacred to loneliness, and haunted by winter in days when it was spring in the woods.

But then she gave up trying to keep her mind from her trouble; for, with all she could do, that childish whisper was there: "I was a loving wife to you, Theobald."

"I, too, have been loving," she said, and, broken down, hid her face in her hands, with blind suffering and a load of despair. Then, lifting her head defiantly, she was shutting

The Spanish Wine

the window when three ships of war glittered in a lake of the moonlight.

"The ships from England," she said, and knew the help was coming at last. But then she forgot, and stared at them through a shadow of tears.

"The ships? What ships?" she replied, as if she spoke to another, and, shutting the window, she tripped over her train, and went across to the hearth, blindly with stumbling feet, but still holding her head as high as she used. Keeping her eyes down as she went, she saw the light on the floor: and it reminded her of the sheen of the rushes in the tower in the hills. "I wish I had been better to Shamus," she said to herself. "He was a man I could trust."

The fire shone on the silver on the table, and she lifted the flagon; for she was dizzy and faint. After a little fumbling, she chanced to touch a spring in its neck, and then the top opened, and she poured out the wine.

When All were Old

As she did so, the monk lifted up the tapestry screen.

The fire was big at her back, and glowed through the delicate spout of the wine, and left her face in the shadow.

"Have you tasted the wine?" he cried.

"Not yet," said she, with indifference; and turned to her husband and met his eyes as he came up to the hearth. It was strange to her that he was the same.

"I was sure no one could open it," the monk said, as he took the flagon out of her hands.

"Dear, you are looking pale," said Dunluce.

"I am not well to-night," she said slowly.

"You are so tired," he said gently. "And it is wearisome to be left here alone."

"I have not been here all the time," said she, answering at random, and dimly wondering if her voice was as altered as it sounded to her, and if talking would long keep pain-
ing her as much as it did.

The Spanish Wine

"Why, what did you find to do?" said he, absently; for he had forgotten the monk's talk, and was thinking how would she bear what he must tell her at last. It made him chill to see how old she was looking.

"Oh, different things," said she.

"Yes," said the monk, as he stood on her husband's right, and was putting the flagon back on the table. "I saw you with Downpatrick below."

"You?" she cried, turning. "Where were you? and how could you see me?"

Said Dunluce: "You speak as if it was true!"

"Why do you keep up such a fire!" she said faintly, and put her hand to her eyes; "the room is stifling to-night."

Hastily lifting the silver cup from the table, she had it raised to her lips before the monk could spring forward, and he was only in time to strike it out of her hand.

When All were Old

"The wine is poisoned," he cried, as the cup clanged on the floor.

"He is mad," cried Dunluce, stepping between them, and shoving the monk staggering back.

Leaning her left hand on the mantelpiece, she whispered :

"What have you come back for, Sebastian?"

"An old dream," said the monk.

"You know the man?" said Dunluce.

"This is Sebastian Cartan," she said.

Said the monk: "I was her ladyship's servant."

She said: "You came to kill me, Sebastian?"

"Not you."

"It was poison?"

"The most deadly of all."

Shuddering, she drew back her gown from where the cup and the wine lay on the floor.

"And you a monk?"

"No, not a monk," said he, putting the

The Spanish Wine

cowl back on his shoulders. "The disguise is no more use to me now." Without the cowl, he looked older, for his hair had turned white.

Said Dunluce gravely: "And yet you heard my confession?"

"I wanted to hear it," he replied with indifference.

She said: "It was sacrilege!"

"If I had any belief."

"But honour —"

"I believed in it once."

"You came here for revenge?" said Dunluce.

"I did. It is my turn to confess."

"Sir," said Dunluce, in a deliberate way, "of course I know why you looked for it."

Said she: "I never told you about it."

"Never told me what?"

"Dear, I have hid nothing else from you."

Dunluce looked hard at his wife.

"Well, well," he said, "we won't talk

When All were Old

of it now. Sir, as I was saying, I wronged you."

"You?" she said.

"Ages ago, before I came here again."

"Ages ago," said Sebastian, "and I remember that time better than yesterday."

"But he was here then," she said.

Said Sebastian: "I had people at home."

"Ah!" she said, "tell me no more."

"I have been a fighter all my days," said Dunluce, as if he was pondering, "and ready with blows; but my anger cooled with my blood."

Said Sebastian: "The past governs us in spite of forgetfulness."

"Why did you come now?" she said slowly, finding him indescribably fallen.

"A letter from Father Francis had told me Hugh O'Carroll was here."

"Oh! I understand," she said, whispering, "but he has been here a long time."

The Spanish Wine

"The priest's letters were rare, and he mainly wrote about books."

Dunluce went on: "You tried to revenge yourself."

"I did not try."

"I have hanged fifty men in my time on weaker proof of their guilt than finding them with poison, disguising themselves in an enemy's house."

"An enemy's house."

"You choose to think it so, sir. Yet no one shall interfere with you now: and, sir—I ask your forgiveness."

"You give me back the dregs of my life. I am not reluctant to die."

"Sebastian, I ask your forgiveness, too," she said softly.

Stooping, he picked the silver cup from the floor.

"It has another dint now: there are poisoned dregs in it still."

Then he put the cup on the table.

When All were Old

“Forgiveness has no meaning for me. I suppose I shall not see you again,” he went on, and looked at her steadily. “Ah, well! we are strangers—though the room is the same. I remember the old scenes from the plays. The years have been hard to that golden maiden Antigone. How the fire glows on the blind face of the King!”

CHAPTER IX

A SINNER'S TRAGEDY

AS Sebastian went down the stairs, and along the gusty corridor slowly, with shambling and irresolute steps, he was thinking vaguely of scenes that seldom came to his mind.

There was a dull ugly boy looking out of the little panes of a rattling window in a draughty and leaky wooden house on a hill.

Behind him, a withered little old man was crouching over the fire, and holding his knotted and skinny hands to it, mumbling in a talkative mood, as if he was telling the logs they must fight the world, and believe in no kindness, and be on guard against

A Sinner's Tragedy

friends. "They wronged me: but I made them repent it," he muttered under his breath, "sooner or later, I had revenge on them all." But the old man and the logs had nearly done with the world.

A tiny neglected girl was sitting under the table, making believe it was the roof of her house. As she sat on the floor, she held a flower-pot between her knees, and was stirring imagined soup in it gaily for that flourishing tribe of dolls she did not possess.

The boy cared nothing at all for the old man, or the child, whose heart was breaking with love. The approaches of her timid abashed tenderness were as little to him as the fits of crying and anger that came on her sometimes when her wishes were crossed, though mostly she was bright in a secret imagined world of her own. As he moped there, he was heart-sick of that rafted and dark room, and was telling himself he would go and live as a monk.

The Spanish Wine

The rain sighed in the bushes, and softened so now and then, he could only notice it shimmer against the dark of the lilac. The dim mountains were milky, and the forests were black, and the white walls of a cabin were glimmering where the meadows were grey.

Then the boy was older and skulked in these dusky resounding vaults of the Castle, eating his heart at the slights he met because he was poor. That thought of being a monk haunted him still, but now he hungered to find a little happiness first. Sometimes, as he was doing his hair, and so found himself forced to confront that unwelcome picture of his bony despondent face, he would wonder whether he was destined for love, and would fancy such a passion would cleanse his heart, as a fire scorches the weeds on a mountain and sets the stubble in flame.

“Love puts you in touch with the misfor-

A Sinner's Tragedy

tunes of others," Father Francis would say in his sorrowful and silvery voice. "I have never hated nor loved: but I own I have a fondness for rabbits; and it has been grievous to me when my silly pets have been cooked."

But the tall priest with his hazy eyes and white hair, and the Earl with his lofty impassive look and long beard, and truculent limping O'Connor, and the clattering garrison, rousing the echoes of the corridors with the whirring and throbbing of drums and the chanting of bugles, were like the things of a dream, compared with the young girl who went by coldly and never gave him a glance.

Wretched at her indifference, soon he gave up his hope to be saintly; and his dreams became vivid in sleep, and lasted into his waking time, and he believed they were true. Sometimes she was kinder in them; but when they met she had the eyes of a stranger. There was one dream he had often, and in it

The Spanish Wine

he used to open his window and fly away in the dark. This grew on him till he almost believed he could fly; and he would shut himself into his little room, and stand there on tiptoe, flapping his arms as if he thought they were wings, while moonlight struck his wan face and the black and lank hair hanging down on his shoulders, and he would wonder to find himself unable to soar. Once he nearly threw himself out in that confidence; and often he wanted to draw the big Earl aside, and tell him that secret, and so win his respect. Then, too, he had fits of self-hatred, when he would long to destroy or torture his body, as if he thought it an enemy.

After that, came the brief incredible time when he was Jessica's lover. The conquered and high things of his nature rose dominant and stood beside hers. The cowardice that had fevered him, peopling an indifferent world with enemies, passed from him and left him a man.

A Sinner's Tragedy

Life was a fair city with chimes in the morning, as he stood on the hills. It seemed to him now, he had only lived in that time, and in those hours of his childhood when he had been strangely uplifted by the rushing of Allua — that sorrowing river — in the shadows of Desmond, or the dawn golden on the head of the mountain.

He had paced in this corridor, when his heart was so full of a treacherous sunshine, it was boyish for once, while a girl's cheek was soft and warm against his — but how could that have been true?

As he shunned that remembrance, another came to his mind. An ugly mean little man was jostled and mocked in loud and populous streets crushed between palaces in the glitter of Pisa. Sometimes he slunk into the shady Cathedral, or kept in the Campo Santo, beside the paintings of Death and Judgment, to be where nobody saw him, and yet not so

The Spanish Wine

imprisoned as he felt in his garret, while he peered down at the gaudy throngs, when the people were clamorous and the bugles were blowing. His heart sickened with hate of the multitudes that trod on the fallen. For he was one of the fallen now, as he compounded his drugs, because he could get no work as a doctor, and so his customers came to him to buy poisons at night. At first, he shut his eyes to the use of the things he sold; but as time went on, and he saw the city aghast when some Duke or Cardinal died, his thrills of remorse ceased and he was proud of his work. Those furtive and shaken visitors, in their cloaks and masks, knocking stealthily at his door, in the dark, did not haunt him as much as a splendid youth with long curls and the lofty ways of a king. Years passed, and piled the market-stalls with the lilies and roses of spring, and the green figs and the peaches of early summer, and the melons of scorching weeks, and

A Sinner's Tragedy

Autumn's abundance of heavy grapes and pomegranates: and the wind from the mountains rattled his flasks and phials together on frozen nights: but that youth haunted him still, without a shadow of time. As his blinking and bleared eyes measured the grains, he thought how little would grind that comely head in the dust.

At first, he had begun by providing his sister with the money their father left, and then he had come to study at Pisa; and though he dreamt of revenge, that was a matter of course in times when a wrong was a stain till it was fully repaid. The servants had told him Lord Theobald Butler had been much at the house, where no one else ever came: because he was too feeble to face him in a duel, he planned winning the power to take revenge as a rival. Borne down by miserable years, he had sunk to be derided by peasants, and to live as a poisoner. Finding in vices his only glimmers of pleas-

The Spanish Wine

ure, he still had that longing to wreck his body, as if there would be unspeakable happiness in dashing it to destruction below, from his garret, when there was no one to see: and this grew on him, till he dared not look down after dark, but would close his shutters with trembling, keeping his eyes on the ranked roofs that beleaguered him like a menacing army.

Then came the time when he had been sick nearly to death, and all had given him over, till he came to, and dressed slowly, and tottered across his garret to touch his poisons and grimy crucibles, as if they were friends, and found in their midst a stained letter, and, breaking the silk thread and big seals with a fumbling skeleton hand, lifted the paper close to his eyes, because the writing was small, but could not read it till he sank, dizzy and worn, in the old chair by the window. When he read Hugh was adopted at the Castle, he took this as a proof

A Sinner's Tragedy

his old suspicion was just, and grew cold to discover how close he had come to a death in disgraced solitude without his revenge; and then, looking up from the crumpled paper, he saw the sun shine on dusty phials of poison. Then it seemed to him he had made up his mind long ago to sell all his goods now, and go back to Ireland, and strike at last, and get rid of the weary burden of life.

Sebastian thought of these things, as before now he had stood watching himself. There had been times when it had seemed to him a remote and austere soul was held down by his stained body and saw its sins from a height above forgiveness or blame. Such rare moments assisted to blacken his life, for they tore the common and kind veil of illusion; but yet in a little time their remembrance had weakened, and he had gone on his way. When the sickness had brought

The Spanish Wine

him near death, he had felt as if he was standing aloof from that writhing and irrational sufferer, and saw freedom begin. That starved and deformed face would not be mocked any more. There would be rest for the weak hands that had groped in the dung-hills for a treasure in vain. As in his crazed boyhood he struggled to flutter out in the dark, so he longed then to be unseen and alone, and wander in the country of stars.

Now, as he went by the lower stairs and through echoing corridors on a line with the tide, he fell in remembrance of his voyage from Genoa, and thought how, as he lolled on the swinging deck, and heard the thrum of the wind aloft in whispering sails, and the sea swilling and scouring the groaning planks of the ship with sullen ponderous waves, his heart was quiet; but restlessness took him when he landed in London, and set him prowling all night in the narrow and dim streets of that gabled city, and drove

A Sinner's Tragedy

him out in the early morning, along the highroad through meadows and smug villages, whose moon-faced and smocked rustics stood gaping at his clothes and his haggard eyes as he passed muttering, for he could not be still, and had to hum in that tuneless and hoarse voice of his, or explain his wrongs to imagined friends, or rehearse what he would say to Dunluce. So, sleeping under hedges, and shunning houses for fear of being detained, he had reached Liverpool, and, putting to sea in the packet, had grown quiet; and after that, had kept calm, because since the long distance was overcome, he was sure Destiny used him, and so he had gone about his business in Dublin coldly, without care, and had made his plan on a whim, choosing a monk's disguise in a mockery of his dreams of a cloister.

There he had come on his sister, — a little woman grown old in looks without a change in her heart. Though she had many friends,

The Spanish Wine

and her life seemed pleasant to them, he saw the heartbreak, forgotten in her gossiping moods. But she felt things too much to be able to feel them long at a time; and so it was well she could be babyish mostly, in spite of hours when her heart cried, as a child sobs in the dark when there is nobody near. The love she would have spent on her father and brother, if they had let her, had gone to Dunluce; and she worshipped him so, she had been unable to think of any one else, and had been tender to Hugh, as a child fondles a satisfactory doll. Most thought her a giddy kind little woman, without a care in the world. Now she went with her brother to Inishowen, and was glad to be with him, since she looked up to him for his wisdom and saintliness. There she took the news of her son's death, as if the sorrow went by, as a storm passes a little flower in a field.

But when he told her they were not far

A Sinner's Tragedy

from the Castle, she changed, and begged him with tears to take her there; so that night, he put on his monk's dress, and set sail with her, and a favouring wind carried them across in the dark. His heart rose and was still, when he saw the hulk of the Castle, black sheer and tremendous among the mists of the morning.

Lost in such memories, he came to the dwarf's cell, and there saw nothing but chains and a tiny pitcher of water and a morsel of bread. Asking himself why he had come there, he remembered a vague fancy the dwarf would be able to find him his boat and get him out of the Castle, while unless such assistance was forthcoming, the sentries would want a word from Dunluce. Finding the cell forsaken, he thought the dwarf would come back by the secret gate when he had landed Downpatrick.

"My heart is too tired to go on panting

The Spanish Wine

much longer. I go up dark stairs, and the night is heavy about me," he said, as he went through the black corridors, where the torches in frames flung restless infrequent splashes of dusk; and he felt nothing could matter now, because the end was so near.

Now he thought of the day's doings, with the wonder he felt when he saw Jessica standing on the weedy and battered steps in the dawn, with the little dwarf on her left, and the rigid and grim troopers behind in armour reddened by keen light that made the rust on the bars of the gate at their backs glisten like blood, while the watchman challenged him hoarsely, unseen aloft on the great walls that loomed over the black archway and lifted long ramparts and the banner of England.

There she stood, elderly, with a haughty severe face, and with her eyes on the sea; and when he landed, she knelt down for his blessing, formally — and that was their

A Sinner's Tragedy

meeting. What had become of the young girl whose brave eyes once made him blind to the bitter things of the world?

Then came the day's quietness; and he, who had hated noises so much, began to shrink from that stillness with its menace of battle, and to have a longing for cock-crow and the barking of dogs and the kindly sounds of the earth. It was as if in that place he began to wake from a dream: but still he fancied Dunluce contemptuous in the gladness of youth.

Then, as he walked in a gallery, a deliberate step was on the flags, and a big trooper, in old armour and a weather-stained coat of gilded buff, came along, and a narrow and frosty slab of light from a window-slit struck the man's face, and showed it haggard and worn. There was Dunluce: and then Sebastian was shaken, as if his purpose was gone. Till then, people had been alien to his suffering eyes, and he had understood none: but

The Spanish Wine

now he thought he saw well — Dunluce was dwindled and human, a dull great-hearted soldier, and he himself was a broken man, warped by the sickness of mind that had given his father brooding and bitterness and shrinking from every one, and his sister her wincing and tremulous heart and her hysterical passion. His years had gone by in that fever: and he stood again now where it began in his boyhood.

Then came the scene in the round Tapestry Room, when they had heard the bell toll: and it was in his mind to enable his sister to see Dunluce once, as she desired it so much, and then to take her away. Yet the talk angered him, and left him irresolute: and when he was asked to hear Dunluce's confession, he felt there was no way to draw back, neither did he wish to, indeed; and he had the heart of a judge as he saw his enemy humbled. But that feeling went, and he found himself there as a monk, hearing a con-

A Sinner's Tragedy

fession at last, in the little chapel that saw him kneel as a penitent, and take Communion from old Father Francis, and dream of goodness in vain. Looking up, he saw Jessica, and then he put his purpose aside finally, and knew himself fallen, but not entirely forgetful of old religion and kindness.

As he thought of that moment, he came to the hidden door in the granite, and pushing it open, and stepping in, and shutting it after him, began feeling his way. When he had gone down some distance, he heard a clashing of steel above the clamouring gusts and the sullen thuds of the water. Then the wind blustered in his ears; and it deafened him, till he got to the passage at the foot of the steps and saw the cavern lit up.

Creeping stealthily forward, he got close to the brink. Light shook on the waves and

The Spanish Wine

the dripping faces of swimmers. Men were swimming towards him, and behind them were boats with officers and torchmen erect among heaps of armour and weapons; and the wandering flush stained the steel, and gave the wet and dishevelled heads underneath a lost and desperate look. There was no sound but the noise of wind and sea, and a whimpering overhead, where the gulls darted as wild as the precipitate shadows.

"Have you been back long?" said Downpatrick, just on his left.

Sebastian drew away, holding his breath, and then said: "How did you know me?" as if he had expected him there.

"I remember you quite well," said Downpatrick. "What do you want?"

"I came to look for the dwarf."

"There he is," said Downpatrick, with one of his rounded little languorous gestures.

There on the left, was Shaun the Bat, lean-

A Sinner's Tragedy

ing on a boulder, and muttering excitedly as he looked at the troopers.

"So he has turned traitor: and the Castle is yours?"

"Yes, the ships from England are out in the offing; but their help is too late."

"But why has he done it?"

"For revenge on the Countess, because when she was small she abandoned his master, a wild ruffianly outlaw."

"He could have murdered her long ago."

"He wanted more: and now he has brought the Castle to ruin."

"But he has eaten her bread."

"Well," said Downpatrick airily, "it seems he regarded himself as a prisoner, and lived in the dungeon. He is full of the subtle innocence of our peasants in Ireland, honourable and delighting in guile and little crafty distinctions."

"He knew the gate when the house belonged to his master?"

The Spanish Wine

"Yes, but when he told me about it I was afraid of a trap, so I hit on the plan of getting the Countess to come and speak to me here. I knew she would not share in a plot."

"And she trusted you also?"

"Good women are bad judges of character."

"But why did she come?"

"Well, she thought if she made terms for a truce with me first, she could win her husband's consent."

"I understand," said Sebastian, and though the doubt he had felt, when he had witnessed the meeting, had gone when he had stood face to face with her, yet now he was glad to have the matter explained, and felt he would almost have hated her if he had found she had fallen from what he thought of her when he worshipped her first. That old love was awake in him, as a burning turf hidden under ashes at night is found glimmering still when it is morning again. A wan morning had come

A Sinner's Tragedy

to him, and the night was forgotten: and here the friend he had foolishly trusted was at treachery still. That bland face seemed the same, though youth had gone away from the eyes. The fine doublet was purple, and the scent was unchanged; and the old delicate dagger Downpatrick had been accustomed to finger so gracefully was there in his belt.

"Poor woman," Downpatrick said thoughtfully, "she even supposes I am fond of her husband — the big blustering bully! I had him waylaid in Dame Street; and tried to poison him once."

"You speak frankly, my lord."

"You and I are men of the world," the other said, watchfully, inviting a confidence.

"Dunluce thought you were dead."

"It was a part of my plan," said Downpatrick complacently. "He had spies, and it was given out I was dead and would be buried to-night, as the news would throw the garri-

The Spanish Wine

son off their guard, and any stir in my camp would be set down to the funeral. When the bell tolled —”

“We all heard it.”

“Well, that was the signal for my men to get under arms, and they were to attempt to surprise the big gate, while I stole in at the back. My men are behind time,” he went on, “their boats were too big for the opening of the cavern, and I had to send back for little ones to carry the armour while the troopers swam in.”

“And are you going to lead?”

“From the rear. Some of them are to look for Dunluce in his parlour up in the Tower.”

“His wife will be there.”

“I dare say she will be killed. A strange room, that is: I never quite knew what all the tapestry meant.”

“Things from Greek plays about destiny and the work of the past.”

A Sinner's Tragedy

"Is that so?" said Downpatrick. "You were always a scholar; but I am a beggarman at the banquet of Greeks, and pick up crumbs from the floor and hear the singing interpreted. Well, now I'll give the word to advance."

Sebastian glanced at the troopers, and saw none of them close, for they had kept out of earshot: all things seemed far, except that prosperous figure in the foreground of that hazy and wild picture of armed men on the brink of the lit patches of sea. Old passion darkened his mind, and set a cramp in his hands. Life had nothing to offer, but this one chance to give it up as a sacrifice.

"You fooled her well," he said softly.

"It was easy," Downpatrick said calmly, as he turned away, lifting his sword to give the word to his men.

"Then die for betraying her," Sebastian cried, snatching the dagger, and stabbed him with all his might in the back.

The Spanish Wine

"How charming of Sebastian!" Downpatrick said, as his followers pulled him out of the water.

"Kill him, all the same!" he went on kindly: but Sebastian had vanished, and the bits of the dagger were lying where he had stood. The blade had been shattered against the cuirass Downpatrick was wearing under his doublet.

"Forward!" he cried: and Sebastian, running for life, up the black stairs, heard it, and stumbled, as the clinking of steel grew on the steps. Then he reached the door, and the gallery seemed miles, as he ran, clutching his gown with his left hand, and stretching his right, as if he was reaching for help. Once he cried out "The enemy!" in a little and hoarse voice: but there was nobody near. First, his heart leapt in agony, and then it was still, and his neck ached, and his mouth parched, and his eyes were darkened and scarcely saw the lights as the pavement ap-

A Sinner's Tragedy

peared to spring from under his feet. Choking, he sprang up the winding stairs, but he staggered at every step, and his knees gave, and he ran against the wall at the turns. As he fell fainting, he heard the troopers below. Blind and broken, he scrambled up to his feet: but his pace was a totter, and a weight crushed him and grew. The clashing of steel deafened him, and above it he heard the patter of sandalled feet on the stone. At that softer sound, he was maddened by an unreasoning fear. It seemed to him he had been running for ever: he was dead, he thought, and this was his punishment, to be old and feeble, and fly up innumerable stairs in the dark, with enemies touching him, and with a message to carry, that would atone if he could give it in time. Then he floundered on the landing at last — and the clicking sandals were close.

“Jessica!” he shrieked, but his cry was

The Spanish Wine

little more than a whisper, "Save yourself!
The enemy! Jessica!"

Then he flung up his arms, and sprawled
crashing against the door, with a gasp,
stabbed in the back.

CHAPTER X

THE SPANISH WINE

MEANWHILE, Dunluce and his wife had been speaking in the Tapestry Room.

"Dear," he began, "we can put everything right, now we talk it over alone."

"We are not alone," she said, softly.

"Why, what do you mean?" said he, starting, and looking over his shoulder.

"There are people between us."

"People?" said he. "I don't understand."

"Hugh, for one," she said, sighing.

"Dear, you are so tired," he said kindly.

"Listen," she said. "If I had been misled in my loneliness by the dream of a love, — if I had met Downpatrick to-night —"

The Spanish Wine

"But this is impossible!"

"Suppose it was true? Your eyes give me the answer. Yet no sin of yours could ever weaken my love. I have so much love in my heart, there is no room for forgiveness."

"Is it true?" he said.

"Yes."

Stepping suddenly forward, he took her into his arms.

"Dearest," she cried, "it does not alter your love?"

"My own child, my little delicate girl," he said softly. "Rest your head here, and forget there is any one in the world but your lover."

She whispered, "I had never a home, till I found it here in your arms."

"Oh, what a tired little girl!" he said. "It is so wicked to worry her. What is the use of her big lumbering husband if he lets her be tired? My girl has been saying such wild incredible things."

The Spanish Wine

"You don't believe me!" she said, drawing away.

"Sweetheart, I believe you and trust you, as I have done since we were children together. You must lie down and take a nap for a little."

"I suppose you think I am mad?"

"I know you are feverish and worn out," he said gently.

"I was mad to believe your love would conquer your pride. I tell you, those incredible things I have been saying were true."

"Yes, yes," he said soothingly, "I am sure they are, child.

"Where is Sebastian? Call him, and the dwarf too, for they saw me."

"The dwarf?"

"He brought Downpatrick, and told me where I would find the secret door in the wall."

Dunluce looked at her a moment in silence: then, turning, he walked slowly away across the room to the window.

The Spanish Wine

Taking the flagon, she filled the cup with the wine.

There he stood for a time: then he came back, heavily, as if he was old.

"God help me," he said, "I don't know what I should do."

"If you love, you will forgive," said his wife: but he did not seem to have heard her.

"About Downpatrick," she said. "If you knew more, you might think I meant it all for the best. As for that poor rehearsal of love—it is many a year since I put away the things of a child. We are growing old, my lord, now. What has a woman's passion to do with the pretty and effeminate foolishness of babies that simper and make love in the moonlight?"

"Time was, when I would have been maddened by jealousy; but now that is over," he said, without looking up.

"Over a long time," she said faintly.

The Spanish Wine

"Other things are moving me now."

"Whatever they are, they can be nothing to me, when they are compared with our love. But that is over — or did you love me at all? God only knows how long you have been deceiving and mocking me. Well, this is the end of it," she said, lifting the cup. "The dead sit here to-night. There is my father, with Shamus and Sir Walter beside him, — grim and feeble Sir Walter."

"What is the use of this?" he said sadly.

"I know there is no wine in the cup."

"I drink to you!" she said; "I drink to you!"

Putting the cup down on the table, she took the chair by the hearth.

"How cold the wine is!" she said, stretching out her hands to the fire. "How simple everything seems! It was stormy at sea: but now I have come into the port. I can speak now," she said, as she leant back in

The Spanish Wine

her chair. "I shall not be proud any more. Think how I am changed by a moment and a mouthful of wine. 'Jessica the Proud,' you used to call me, 'your little Empress' — I dare say you remember."

"I don't know what I should do," he said again, as if he had not listened at all. "But one thing is sure —"

"One thing is sure — not love, nor honour, but death. And I thank God it is sure. I used to fear it so much! You need not think I was blind, though I have not trusted my eyes till this proof; but I have seen your love wither, and die away in the years. Oh! how did I live when I saw that, and was childless?"

"You were always pitying mothers."

"A woman would have known what I meant. The long misery of hoping for motherhood has broken my heart. Well, your love faded, and no doubt that was natural; for you see I am old. But still, I

The Spanish Wine

was so proud of your honour. Theobald, what am I to think of it now?"

"What do you mean?" he said.

"When you made love to me, you were married already. You brought your son to my house, and let me think him a stranger. You used to see his mother in Dublin. I heard her say so myself—yes, she is here, under my roof. Hugh was in the secret, of course. Sebastian knew of it—how bitter that was to me! Well, it is time for us to forgive and forget."

"How long have you known?"

"So it is not easy to live. I set you free, and you can marry her now. You loved her all the time, I dare say; but she was poor, and you left her. How could I look back on my life? Jessica the Proud! I trusted you: and this was between us. This ran in your mind, when we were riding together. You thought of this, when I was asleep in the

The Spanish Wine

nights, with my arm on you and my head on your shoulder."

"It was a mock marriage," he said, "a sin of my youth —"

And then the door was dashed open.

"Shamus Abu! Vengeance for Red James of the Spears!" cried the dwarf, as he sprang into the room before a rush of the troopers. There he stood, holding a dagger up, and the troopers shouted "Downpatrick!" and were echoed below. Then they reeled from Dunluce, and some went down on his right and his left, and the others staggered back on the landing, and were huddled, when he sprang on them over a man prone on the threshold. One was pushed backwards over a step, and lost his footing, and fell clattering, and they broke in a panic.

Dunluce turned in the doorway, in a gleam of the fire. The dwarf and Sebastian were lying prone at his feet. The dim screen of the door was floating out like a flag.

The Spanish Wine

"Shamus?" she said, as if she spoke in her sleep. "Who was talking of Shamus? Red James of the Spears had the kindest eyes in the world."

"Jessica," said Dunluce, as he went to her. "I have driven them back."

"The fire is out, dear," she said. "I think it must be freezing to-night."

"Have you killed her? Has she tasted the wine?" cried a voice faintly: and Dunluce saw Sebastian kneel on the threshold, and clutch the sides of the door, struggling, and then totter across, with the look of a man stricken to death.

"My lady! My dear lady!" Sebastian said, falling on his knees by her, and clutching her hand.

"Listen, I'll explain it all now. I love you alone," she said softly.

Said he: "All my life I have loved no one but you."

The Spanish Wine

Dunluce turned away from them, putting his sword into its scabbard.

"I am dying now," she went on.

"Merciful God!" cried Dunluce, "the cup is half full of wine!"

"Dearest," said Sebastian, "the dwarf stabbed me, as I was trying to warn you. Nothing can divide us again. By the right of the greater love, I have claimed you for my own, after all."

"I can't hear you," she said. "What did you say? How loud the waves are to-night! Listen, I wanted Downpatrick to agree to a truce."

"Dear heart," said the man, kneeling beside her. "These troubles are over, and blotted out by our love."

"Jessica," said Dunluce. "Tell me one thing: did you always care for Downpatrick?"

"What do you mean, love? and how low you are speaking! My head aches with the

The Spanish Wine

hammering of the sea on the stones. I have liked him fairly well, as a friend."

"But you said you had cared —"

"That was ages ago — a child's fancy — all a foolish mistake. I thought I cared for Sebastian —"

"For God's sake let her be!" said Sebastian, looking up at Dunluce, "her mind wanders, but she knew me a minute ago."

"Oh! who was that speaking?" she said, "I am afraid of him, Theobald. I thought we were alone in the room. I must have fainted, just now. Help me! I am going again."

Said Sebastian: "On a terrible journey, but I am going beside you."

"Sir," said Dunluce, taking her hand gently, "she does not know you are here."

"I could not live, when I feared you did not love me at all," she said. "Little and common people may live married when the loving is over. We have lived greatly."

The Spanish Wine

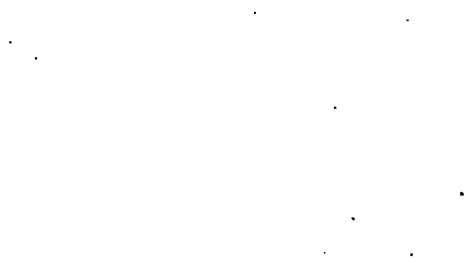
"And loved greatly," Dunluce said, lifting the cup with his left hand, and holding it out to her, and drinking the wine.

"I drink to you!" he said. "I drink to you!"









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